FPCA AGM Chair’s report.

March 2022

It has been another unusual and quiet year for the FPCA. At this time last year lockdowns were still in place, with a limit on the number of people who could mix outdoors and indoor venues remaining closed until May. As vaccinations began to be rolled out further restrictions were lifted over the summer, but an increase in numbers saw some restrictions re-introduced before Christmas. It was against this background that the FPCA has been running events over the last year, opening up when it was safe to do so, but equally restricting events and centre use when the risks were too great.

Despite the more limited number of events and activities than in previous years, it has never the less been an exciting time with important work being done and key events still running. Some highlights of the last year were:

The installation of gazebos in our back garden. In the previous term (20-21) we received a grant from Oxford City Council to improve our outdoor space. The gazebos were purchased not long after our AGM and installed ready for summer. They have made a big difference to our garden space, and with lighting now installed too we look forward to using them more and more. A special thank you to Nick Gannon for putting them up.

Although the Community Association decided to limit events, we did open up for groups that served a very important need in our community and beyond. In particular this was for the Over-60s club and the Baby Café. The Over-60s lunch club carried on delivering cooked meals on Fridays to those who were in need, and has recently gone back to being held in-person at the Community Centre. This group provided a vital service and was much-missed face-to-face. Thank you to Rachel and Sara for their work on this.

The Baby Café similarly provides a vital service, for non-mobile babies and their parents. Making use of the gazebos the group was able to operate safely outdoors, but have also recently started making use of the Centre indoors again. We were also able to employ a paid co-ordinator to run this group, and I would like to welcome Sarah Korting who is the baby group lead. Thank you to the volunteers who help run this group too.

Although events have been limited, those we have put on have been successful. Particular highlights were the Christmas Songs, Halloween pumpkin carving and the ever-popular Day of the Dead celebration. We have also seen the return of the Community Café. Thank you to everyone who helped make these possible.

Away from the Community Centre, the Association has taken on the Florence Park Newsletter. After several years and doing an amazing job on this, Jane Gallagher felt it was time to hand this over. As such the Association is now completely responsible for the newsletter. We have so far put out two editions. A big thank you to Jane LIttlehays who has done a fantastic job designing the newsletter, and to everyone who distributed the newsletter and contributed material. We look forward to putting out many more! A special thank you to Uniprint for printing the newsletter. And lastly to Jane Gallagher for all the work she put into this over the years.

Another highlight has been the gardening group which has grown into a wider community project. Since starting as an FPCA group the gardening group has changed its role slightly to an umbrella organization for other gardening and horticultural projects in the area which require volunteers. We are lucky to have so many great community projects in our area, and it is really encouraging to see how charities and organisations can join up and pool resources. Thank you to Rob for his hard work on this.

The campaign to bring back the 16 bus route continues with Acorn, with key county council meetings in April. The FPCA has been active in this campaign as we believe this route was vital for our community. Thank you to Judith for her hard work on this, and we hope that the continued campaign will bring a positive result.

The Association has been fortunate to have received several more business grants from the City Council, and these have been vital in allowing us to survive these times. A large thank you to Oxford City Council.

I would also like to thank our local councilors Cllr Amar Latiff and Paula Dunne for their support. Our Association trustees Judith (secretary), Jane (treasurer), Becci, Stella, Rob and Deb. To Sara Reevell, our Centre Manager for all her hard work and creativity which is responsible for so much of our success and got us through such difficult and uncertain times. To Alan Brown, Jon Flint and all the Social Club committee members. 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 role of membership secretary – a small but vital role. Being a trustee is a great way not only to get involved with what we do, but also to develop your skills, gain experience, and take on responsibility in your community.