

## **WBCA LTD CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT – AGM FOR 2023**

Just like for our users and members, the last year has continued to be dominated by high inflation and utility costs for the centre.

This has meant that 2023 has been a year of consolidation at the centre.

The centre continues to obtain its energy via the Crown Commercial Service, a government body which bulk buys for government buildings, universities, charities and the like. This has continued to provide savings through the year but still with a degree of uncertainty as to the level of utility costs that would be imposed throughout the year.

Despite this, the general upkeep of the centre has continued with maintenance contracts and repairs carried out, where necessary.

Statutory inspections and resulting comments have also been complied with.

The last statement mentioned the centre being awarded £150,000 to extend the carpark, of potentially up to an additional 50 spaces, and that this was being project managed by the council.

The council awarded the contract to a preferred contractor and a new plan was issued along with an updated cost.

Unfortunately, due to the imposition of a number of Tree Preservation Orders to obtain planning consent, the new plan contains a reduced number of additional spaces.

This project continues to be with the council to manage and progress.

A review of the centre's web site was carried out and it was noted that the platform the website was based on was going to be unsupported and was an outdated platform.

So, a new rebuilt website was created based on WordPress as the new platform.

The opportunity was taken, at this time, to revamp the website utilising better features available in the new platform and to update its layout and content.

This was done and the new website went live in August.

Where available the centre tries to obtain 3<sup>rd</sup> party funding or grants to pay for major projects or items to help towards the cost of these.

One such piece of funding, which was found to be potentially available in 2023, was from the Football Foundation. This reportedly offered up to 75% of a project\item cost to help with maintaining\upkeep of grass roots football ground surfaces.

The centre put forward an application for a grant to go towards funding a new tractor, with attachments, to augment the work of the council's contractor, where the centre deems it necessary.

One of the requirements of the funding was for two members of staff to complete an On-line ground keeping course and subsequent test. This was completed.

The funding application, just under £28,000, was subsequently approved.

Following approval an order for the new tractor was placed, the centre's contribution being just over £9,000, which was delivered on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The bar company has now been closed down following the previous closure of the bar facility. However, the bar area, Community Lounge, has continued to be well used and has contributed well to the Centre's indoor revenue.

Use of the centre, in general, continues to be high, both indoor and outdoor, with waiting lists for some facilities at certain time periods.

The 5-A-Side astro cage has continued to be popular since its addition to the centre's facilities.

Trustees will continue to review how the space of the final old tennis court area can be best utilised once the economy settles down and funds can be obtained for what might be proposed.

The list of hirers providing classes, other activities and services, within the centre, has remained steady throughout 2023. NHS blood donation and first aid training continue to use the centre, as do other outside groups, such as, Billericay Striders who have their base at the centre.

Hannakins Farm senior and youth football clubs also continue to be based at the centre. However, the main astro area still continues to be the biggest single revenue provider.

A full list of activities and facilities available at the centre can be found on the new web site as well as an updated news page.

So as in previous statements, the future of the centre continues to look positive on the bookings and use side.

Only time will tell how utility costs will progress and how these will affect the centre in the long term.

Finally, Trustees would like to put on record their thanks for the continued excellent running of the centre by the manager and her staff.