

WBCA LTD CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT – AGM FOR 2022

It is good to see those who have taken time out to attend the AGM this evening, the Trustees extend their thanks.

As during the pandemic, the past year has been dominated by exceptional circumstances, particularly high inflation and soaring utility costs.

The centre obtains its energy via the Crown Commercial Service, a government body which bulk buys for government buildings, universities, charities and many others. This has provided considerable savings over many years. However their forecast of rising costs has seen a doubling of our bills to over 20% of income.

In August 2022 Trustees met with the chairman of Basildon Council and one of our local councillors to discuss the rising energy costs and their impact on the centre. They were unable to offer any assistance.

As a result of complaints from local residents and discussion with the council by Trustees the centre has been awarded £150,000 to extend the existing car park. Trustees obtained quotes for the addition of up to 50 new parking spaces but these were not acceptable to the council. As a result the project is now being handled directly by the council and we await progress.

In the last statement an £88,000 grant from Basildon Council was referred to, which was used to complete the following projects and upgrades.

Below is a list of the main projects funded (+10% by the centre) by this grant:-

- Conversion of the second redundant tennis court into a new 5-A-Side area including the installation of new lighting and fencing to this area.
- Upgrading the remaining manual shutters to electric operation.
- Upgrade of the lighting to the nearest tennis/netball court, known as the **Multi-Use Gaming Area (MUGA)**
- Refurbish showers
- Replacement of the fencing around the final two sides of the furthest old tennis court to match that of the other outside playing areas.

Upgrades to general lighting and the CCTV system, including more/better cameras, larger storage capacity and new larger viewing screen in the office, were also carried out.

A planned project, also mentioned in the last statement, was that of adding “forced ventilation” to the halls. This was a project which came out of the pandemic requirements for “public use” buildings. This was carried out following obtaining a grant of £15,000 from an Essex County Council community initiative named “The Locality Fund”.

An Issue with parking on the bridge, mentioned in the last statement, has continued causing dangerous restricted access to the centre. Originally, to combat this a line of black and yellow striped bollards was installed. These were subsequently vandalised and now a line of raised kerbs has been installed on one side. However this has resulted in vehicles parking on the other side of the bridge. Trustees are now investigating placing a deterrent on that side.

The plant room is continuing to be under maintenance contracts which have covered most of the issues in this area. Some minor repairs and part replacements have also been carried out.

Use of the centre's facilities has continued to be high.

Internally, additional revenue has come from:-

- Use of the centre by the NHS for blood donor sessions.
- Use of the Community Lounge, (bar), for various training sessions, such as First Aid courses.

Externally, following the refurbishment of the lights around the MUGA and the new 5-A-side facility additional revenue has come from:-

- 2 Netball teams now using the MUGA
- The new 5-A-Side cage has a number of sessions regularly booked. However, current demand for this facility is not sufficient for trustees to upgrade the 2nd old tennis court to a similar facility. Trustees are continuing to discuss this area and how it can be used.

The Astro area remains the largest source of revenue with waiting lists for some popular session times.

It is expected that the number of cricket teams using the centre this coming summer will increase from 2 to 3.

The Billericay Striders Running Club continue to use the centre as their base. The Striders' annual 10k road race, which benefits from the facilities at the centre, was voted as The Best Road Race in Essex in 2022.

As usual, a full list of activities and facilities available at the centre can be found on the web site.

In conclusion, the future of the centre continues to look positive on the bookings and use side but the caveat at this time being the level of future utility costs, how long these increased costs last for and the effect these may have in the long term.

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