

Annual Report, 2023-2024



Chairman's Report

I am pleased to report that the Wheathampstead Community Group is going from strength to strength. In some ways this is bad as it means that more people are in need of our support, but in other ways it is good in that we are well-funded and able to offer more to the community.

We are conscious that we are unable to function without the generosity of our residents – that generosity comes in two forms, financial and physical. We have been very lucky to have had some large donations this past year – both from individuals through legacies and straight donations, and from organisations such as the Rotary in Harpenden and Wheathampstead Friends. We are also lucky to have a strong team of coordinators and volunteers to physically deliver our services. It is worth remembering that Michael Mosely has pointed out that volunteering is good for the immune system - so there's a positive return all-round!

We again moved our door-to-door collection this year. Last year we moved it from around Christmas, where it clashed with our other activities, to nearer Easter. This caused problems too as many people were away. This year we delayed it further into May, well away from the Easter break and this has improved our collection. It is fair to say that the main issue the collectors find is that people can't find, don't remember receiving, or need a new leaflet and envelope when they call. Next year we will have a stronger advertising campaign around the collection to improve awareness in advance and during the period. We will also encourage more on-line donations.



Our Community Secretary **Bel Bluemel** personally meets individuals and families that contact us and are in need of help. What Bel does represents the heart of the operation. Our organisation helps individuals and families in many ways and often that help is not directly visible, maybe, for example, we support a general programme of activity or sponsor a piece of playground equipment. Bel, on the other hand,

is dealing with real-life, day-to-day crises such as a broken washing machine that is needed to keep 3 children in school uniform or a freezer that has simply worn out, but the families can't afford replacements.

Our other activities can be looked at in that way too. **Caroline Corderey's** befriending scheme also operates at a very personal level supporting the isolated and lonely. **Mary Walsh** organises the volunteers running the transport service which this year was able to complete over 400 return trips to medical appointments for those who require transport. Both services rely completely on volunteers willing to give up a proportion of their time to help those in need.

In the last year or so we have been unlucky in having some important members of our team step down. **Peter Woods** was a key player in the Thursday Club and **John Gladwin** in the Dementia Friendship and Support Group (Bluebell Café). Fortunately, we have other volunteers playing a greater role for us to help replace those we have lost. People like **Mick Corley** and **Liz Morgan** in the Thursday Club and **Isobel Poole** in the Bluebell Café.



Befriending

Michelle and Tony

The Thursday Club has adapted well to Peter Woods stepping back. With over 20 members and as many volunteers it enables the team to organise a diverse range of activities for the members from Desert Island Discs, Quizzes and Pets as Therapy, to Carpet Boules.

This year once again, thanks go to **Louise Canfield** and **Lucinda Pilkington** who run our Santa's Sleigh collection and the grotto held at the

village's lights-up ceremony. As you can see from the finances (below) this is an important source of revenue for us, but it is also probably the most popular event we organise each year. I know at least one adult without children who would be very disappointed if they missed seeing Santa! A big thanks to Santa himself who wishes to remain anonymous. Louise is also an active member of the committee being involved in several activities.

There are also those who work quietly in the background on our behalf and that aren't as visible as some. For example, **Maggie Fergusson** who organises the meet-up group which goes to the Bull for lunch and **Dexter Ghelfi** who helps with our IT.

Your team of Trustees spend much time liaising with external bodies to get ideas and additional support. These bodies include the Parish Council, Harpenden Trust, Redbourn Community Group, Rotary in Harpenden, James Marshall Foundation, the Citizens' Advice, etc. The Trustees' goal is to support our lead volunteer coordinators named above, by providing ideas and resources to meet their needs.

Everyone involved in the Community Group is a volunteer and Sarah, our Secretary, tells me we've recruited seven more this year – thanks to you all. Volunteering is a great way for individuals to put something back into the community. However, managing an organisation made entirely from

volunteers has its problems. Some volunteers want to get deeply involved, some want to limit the time they spend volunteering and some just want to help occasionally. Combine that with volunteers moving on without giving notice or being

Thursday Club Visits Dunstable Down



too specific about what they can or can't do, makes running the show a challenge. That burden is largely handled by the coordinators of our individual activities, and we should give due credit to them for coping with that challenge.

On a separate note, we are being advised that we should adopt the Charity Commission's recommendation that trustees should be elected on a three-year rotational basis, and we should also have 5 or 6 trustees and not the four we currently elect. Trustees should not serve for more than two consecutive 3-year appointments either. We will discuss these issues at the next Executive Committee meeting and examine how best to implement them.

For a summary of our activities over the last 12 months, please see the leaflet we produced for the annual collection and reproduced below plus the financial summaries at the end of this report.

Apart from those already mentioned, a special thanks should also go to our Vice-Chair, **Anne Howie**, our Secretary, **Sarah Millac** and our Treasurer, **Mike Greensmith** whose report follows below.

Over the past 12 months Wheathampstead Community Group was able to:

- Purchase beds, mattresses, washing machines, fridges, freezers, cookers vacuum cleaners and children's clothing for those in financial difficulties and who otherwise would not be able to afford them.
- Provide a Laptop computer, a specialist pushchair and drumming lessons to children with disabilities/learning difficulties.
- Supply Tesco food vouchers and Foodbank vouchers for those unable to afford basic groceries.
- Help 15 residents with their gardening, home maintenance and IT support.
- Complete 450 return trips to medical appointments for nearly 100 residents, including dentist, optician, physio, GP and Hospital appointments.
- Befriend 11 lonely or isolated residents.
- Provide lunches and activities to 20 less able residents through our Thursday Club.
- Deliver a Monthly Lunch Club for a total of 22 elderly or lonely residents.
- Run a Bi-monthly Dementia Friendship and Support Group (The Bluebelle Café) for 20 members.
- Continue to provide a Stationery pack to every St Helen's and Beech Hyde school leaver annually.
- Support our two primary schools with funds for Educational equipment.
- Continue to organise and expand Santa's Grotto and Sleigh Runs in our village.
- Hold the annual Christmas Singalong, including songs from the Primary school choirs – free to all village residents.

For further information, to seek help from or to volunteer for WCG, please call **07537 176481** or email **secretary@wheathampsteadwcg.org** Visit our website at **www.wheathampsteadwcg.org**
Helping the community since 1966

Registered charity no. 269899

Wheathampstead
WCG
Community Group

**Wheathampstead
Community Group
Annual Appeal**



Help us to help Wheathampstead!

This door-to-door collection is one of our most important fund-raising events, please see the attached envelope and help us deliver even more for Wheathampstead.



We are there when residents need us

Those struggling financially, families and individuals with an immediate problem, the lonely or the disabled. We do our best to help quickly – often when Social Services can't (see over the page). We need a budget of around £28,000 p.a. to deliver these services.



This year, in addition to our day-to-day activities...

...we are supporting the creation of a community hub in the Memorial Hall by renting the hall for the Foodbank. We are purchasing new equipment for the play area in Mollings Drive and continue to provide additional funding to our local primary schools. These projects alone will cost us another £15,000. We've also funded special projects: exercise equipment for the Chapel Gym, a defibrillator in the High Street, equipment for our primary schools, English lessons for Ukrainian refugees, etc.



Legacies

Increasingly we are receiving donations made through legacies and bequests. If you need more information on this, please email treasurer@wheathampsteadwcg.org



The Wheathampstead Community Group is an organisation completely run by Wheathampstead volunteers entirely for the benefit of Wheathampstead residents who need help.



Annual Treasurer's Report

Financial Summary – Year to 30 April 2024

Wheathampstead Community Group continues to be in a healthy financial condition, holding a total of nearly £ 100,000 in reserves following a surplus of income over expenditure of £ 17,389.

Income totalled £ 39,778 and reflected:

- Donations from organisations of £11,999, including significant donations from Rotary in Harpenden from their Classics on the Common event, and from Wheathampstead Friends on the closure of that charity.
- Donations from Individuals of £ 9,234, included £ 4,100 from bequests and legacies and £3,000 received around Christmas that would previously have been part of the Annual Appeal totals.
- Gift Aid receipts of £ 4,100.
- The Santa Sleigh runs and subsequent matched funding raised nearly £ 4,000, another record.
- Annual Appeal donations of £3,351 were part of the 2023 collection which spanned 2 financial years.

Expenditure of £ 22,210 included:

- £ 15,638 spent in the Direct support of clients and the community, 26% less than in 2022/23, mainly because the spend on projects and support of other groups declined. Budgets for 2024/25 include a significant investment on capital projects within the community.
- Fundraising costs remaining roughly constant at £ 1,261
- Charity running costs of £5,311, slightly lower than last year.

The Trustees are aware that we hold more than sufficient financial reserves to maintain the organisation for more than 18 months while continuing to deliver services to the community as described in this report. For this reason, we are planning to review our constitution to enable us to divide our finance and budget between capital and non-capital funding. This will enable us to increase the benefits we deliver to Wheathampstead from our resources while improving financial control.

Wheathampstead Community Group**Financial Year 1st May 2023 to 30th April 2024**

		Financial Year:	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>			Financial Year:	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
INCOME	Collections & Donations	Annual appeal	3,351	5,659	EXPENDITURE	Direct Charitable Expenditure	15,638	21,215	
		Santa Sleigh Collections	3,957	3,823		Fund raising costs	1,261	1,140	
		Collection box proceeds	147	135		Charity running costs	<u>5,311</u>	<u>5,503</u>	
		Donations from individuals	9,234	5,684		Total Expenditure	<u>22,210</u>	<u>27,858</u>	
		Member/Client Contributions	3,352	2,304		Excess Income over expenditure	17,568	7,997	
		Donations from Organisations	11,999	6,917					
	Grants - from:	Wheathampstead Parish Council	-	-		Gain on Investment Valuation	(179)	(2,828)	
		Other	-	1,480					
	Events - Proceeds from:	Village Day Plant Stall	381	294		Total Gain in Year	<u>£ 17,389</u>	<u>£ 5,170</u>	
		John Bunyan Charity Day	-	1,353					
		Singalong	509	456					
	Other Income	WTC Fund Raising	64	370					
		WTC Outings	88	-					
Gift Aid		4,100	4,896	ASSETS					
Investment Income		2,598	2,484	Cash in Hand and at Bank	48,152	30,584			
				Investments	48,783	48,962			
Total Income		<u>£ 39,778</u>	<u>£ 35,855</u>	Total Assets	<u>£ 96,935</u>	<u>£ 79,547</u>			

Sources of Funding 2023/24**Collections and Donations (excl Gift Aid)**

Annual appeal	8.4%
Santa Sleigh Collections	9.9%
Collection box proceeds	0.4%
Donations from individuals	23.2%
Member/Client Contributions	8.4%
Donations from Organisations	30.2%

Events - Proceeds from:

Village Day Plant Stall	1.0%
Carol Singalong	1.3%
WTC Fund Raising	0.2%

Other Income:

WTC Outings	0.2%
Gift Aid	10.3%
Investment Income	6.5%