



THE CITY OF WELLS ALMSHOUSES



Annual Report 2019/2020

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The City of Wells Almshouses (CWA) is an unincorporated trust administered by the City of Wells Almshouses Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Both are registered charities numbers: 1040554 and 1159162 respectively. The CIO is the corporate trustee of CWA and the CIO is governed by a Board of Trustees—see page 5 for details.

CWA is a registered housing provider, regulated by Homes England.

Our aim is to provide good quality, affordable social housing for older people who have a housing need and who have a connection with the City of Wells.

Foreword

By Nick Wilson, Chair of the Trustees

For nearly 8 months, since mid March, the community here at CWA has been in some form of lockdown or restrictions and recent government announcements mean that this situation will continue for some time to come. A number of our residents with underlying health issues are being extremely careful about what they can and cannot do and a spirit of friendship and support has grown as a result of everyone looking out for their neighbours. This is not to say that this wasn't the case before, but rather that everyone is now showing increased awareness of the need to stay safe.

When the potential risks of Covid became clear in March and through the busy spring and summer periods, when we usually become extremely active, we had to cancel the usual open days and events in the gardens and Chapel. This was a great shame but absolutely necessary.

The full management agenda has however continued with the various trustees' committees and full board meetings being conducted "virtually" using Zoom technology. Everyone has adapted to this extremely well. The priority over this time has naturally been the care of our residents and Althea and her team are to be congratulated on the measures they have put in place to achieve this.

As a Board we have also been extremely conscious of the effect that the pandemic has had on the finances of the Almshouses, particularly our investments and financial commitments. World markets took a huge hit initially but then bounced back but there is still great uncertainty. No organisation can be complacent and the next year may well see more turmoil in this area. As any major project here at CWA means dipping into our investments, we are keeping a very careful eye on the whole situation.

Thanks to the extensive programme of refurbishments over the last 7 or 8 years, our buildings and accommodation are in good condition and therefore we have not experienced a flood of major issues and repairs. Any projects which were considered as non-urgent have been put on hold but obviously the small day to day issues and problems have been dealt with immediately. We will always ensure that our residents are well looked after.

During the year we said goodbye to two of our Trustees:

Simon Bruce had been a Trustee for 13 years, serving as both Chair and Vice Chair during this time. I wish to thank Simon for his significant contribution to the Board during a period of considerable change for the charity. Simon has agreed to remain a member of the Land Holdings and Development Committee for which we are most grateful.

Celia Wride had been with us for two years and we thank her for her commitment to CWA and the support she gave us during this time.

This year we also welcomed to the trustee body a second resident trustee, Claire Green who has already proved a great asset to the Board.

The next twelve months will be challenging for us all at CWA but we will face it with determination and confidence for the future and hope that "normality" will return to our lives sooner rather than later.

Best wishes

Nick Wilson

Accountants :

MHA Monahans
Fortescue House
Court Street
Trowbridge
BA14 8FA

Bankers:

NatWest
7 High Street
Wells
BA5 2AD

The Charity Bank

182 High Street
Tonbridge
TN9 1BE

Solicitors:

Tozers
Broadwalk House
Southernhay
West
Exeter
EX1 1UA

Land Agents:

Carter Jonas
Ground Floor
St James House
Lower Bristol
Road
Bath
BA52 3BH

A Challenging Year...

by
Althea
Howarth
CEO

A challenging Year...

Covid-19: Just like within other organisations many of our plans for this year have been put on hold but life at the Almshouses has continued strongly, albeit in a socially distanced manner, as has our work to provide warm and comfortable homes for our residents.

On-going projects: As stated in last year's Annual Report our Trustees approved in principle the refurbishment of CWA's chapel and we then submitted a pre-planning application to Mendip District Council and Historic England to gain their views on the proposed restoration work. We have now received comments from Historic England and the Restoration Committee, with assistance of our appointed architect, will continue to take the project forward and submit a listed building planning application.

Work to upgrade the Guild Room has continued and a new kitchen has been installed. We now have listed building permission to install secondary glazing which should assist in making the room warmer and more comfortable for residents and visitors.

The next stage of the plan to redevelop the old mortuary has been approved by Trustees following consultation with residents, Mendip District Council and Historic England. Our architect has applied for planning permission for one additional almshouse within the development and we are awaiting a decision on this from Mendip District Council.

Our Trustees: We take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new Trustee, **Claire Green**, a resident who joined the almshouses community in mid-2019.

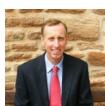
Our ongoing capital and refurbishment programmes:

While the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed progress on some of our plans, we have continued our programme of installing wetrooms in properties to assist residents with poor mobility. Also, one void property has been upgraded and as a result we have welcomed a new resident to the almshouse community. In addition, one complete kitchen upgrade has been completed and we have replaced gas boilers in Llewellyn's where they have become too costly to repair.

Our properties:

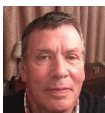
Currently all our properties are occupied and, as mentioned above, we have welcomed one new resident to the almshouses during the last year. Also, of note is that we have seven potential residents on our property waiting list.

Board of Trustees



Nick Wilson - Chairman

Retired Headmaster and a member of the Board since 2012. A Chapter nominee.



Charles Cain—Vice Chairman

Retired Deputy Headmaster
Appointed October 2017.



Stella Ainsworth

Resident appointed in July 2018.



Carol Cox

City Council nomination since 2016.



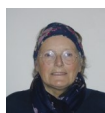
The Very Reverend, Dr John Davies

The Dean of Wells, ex-officio Trustee since November 2016.



Andrew Fawcett

Retired International Trade Consultant
Appointed March 2017.



Claire Green

Resident appointed January 2020.



John North

Director, JGN Consulting Ltd.
Appointed July 2018.



Richard Quarry

Chartered Quantity Surveyor
Appointed January 2019.



Chris Vigar MBE

Retired Marketing Consultant
Appointed July 2018.



Shirley Watt

Retired Chartered Accountant
Appointed in 2015.

Staff Team

Althea Howarth

Chief Executive



Joined CWA in September 2016. BA (Hons) housing & development, Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing has extensive experience as a social housing director and as a consultant.

Patrick McMahon

Finance Controller & Charity Secretary



Chartered Accountant.
Joined CWA May 2019.

Caroline Tollworthy

Scheme Manager



Joined the Trust in January 2013. Had previously worked in residential lettings and voluntary sector housing posts.

Graham Perry

Handyman



Previously worked for BT.
Joined CWA in June 2010.



OUR CHAPEL RESTORATION:



East Window

Despite the Pandemic the Chapel Restoration Committee has continued its work to the greatest extent feasible, headed by its Chair, Chris Vigar MBE. Several applications for financial assistance to renovate and adapt our historic chapel (also called the Bubwith Chapel after the founder, Bishop Bubwith) have been successful and some individuals have also pledged significant sums to support the planned work.

Raising awareness of our chapel project is also an important activity for CWA's Restoration Committee and the members have been contacting local institutions, individuals, and organisations to ascertain whether the chapel, when restored, would represent an interesting and appropriate venue for their activities. This said, the chapel will of course remain, first and foremost, a place of worship and an historic setting for the people of Wells and the surrounding areas to visit, use and enjoy.

During the last year two local experts have undertaken important research to provide additional information about the history of the chapel and we are most grateful to Jerry Sampson who has written an Archaeological Assessment of the chapel and also Holy Well Glass who have drafted a report on the chapel's Mediaeval and East Window which features fifteenth century glass, as shown. Both of these reports can be found on our Website: www.wellsalmshouses.org.uk .

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 situation has meant the cancellation of the very popular and valuable open days. These were simply impossible due to the requirement for social distancing.

Other plans for various entertainments in the chapel also had to be postponed, but we are ready to start again with these as soon as the situation allows.



Mediaeval Window

NEW STEPS FOR LLEWELLYN'S ALMSHOUSES:



As many of you will be aware the main access for our residents who live at Llewellyn's Almshouses is via a stepped entrance and gate. The steps have been causing issues for our residents and their guests who use walking aids and therefore last year we had plans drawn up to widen the steps to make them more user friendly. As the site is Grade 2 listed it was necessary to gain Listed Building consent for the works and then the contract was tendered.

The construction work has been undertaken and the new steps and handrails were completed in Spring 2020. We have been delighted with the quality of the work and the wider steps have provided a much improved access for residents and visitors alike.



THE ALMSHOUSE COMMUNITY:

Throughout this difficult time the Almshouse Community has not let social distancing prevent the community spirit among residents from thriving. For example:

- Bubwith residents have held socially distanced barbecues and Sunday morning hymn services.
- Llewellyn's residents have also held events to celebrate residents' birthdays and their annual commemoration of Henry Llewellyn's birthday went ahead with a socially distanced buffet.

Also, unfortunately, our gardeners from 'Heads Up' have been unable to work with our residents in the Bubwith gardens this year due to the pandemic. However, as you would expect, our residents in both Bubwith and Llewellyn's have 'stepped up to the plate' and as can be seen from the photographs below our gardens have again been stunning this year.



The Finances for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2020

INCOME

Our total income for the year was approximately £287,000 comprising housing charges to residents and investment income.

EXPENDITURE

Our total expenditure during the year was £274,000 mainly comprised of property upkeep costs, property improvements and staff remuneration.

OVERALL OUTCOME

Our net income of £13,000 together with losses on our investments of approximately £112,000, meant that our total deficit for the year was £99,000. This deficit was due to falls in the stock market because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in recent months these investment values have recovered. In the last 10 years we have spent approximately £1,250,000 on improvements to our properties by way of upgrading facilities, installing double glazing, improving access and installing wet rooms. The Trustees are confident that they have the resources to cope with a number of potential adverse events as well as ensuring that our residents are housed in comfortable, secure and pleasant accommodation that meets current day standards and expectations.

About the City of Wells Almshouses

There are five almshouse buildings in the City of Wells providing 33 units of accommodation for older people in housing need. There is a mix of one bedroom flats and cottages on two sites either side of Priest Row in the centre of the city.

The earliest of the five almshouses was founded in the fifteenth century through a legacy provided from the estate of the former Bishop of Bath and Wells and Treasurer to King Henry IV, Nicholas Bubwith. Bubwith's Almshouse is located next to St Cuthbert's Churchyard and includes a chapel and Guild Room. In the early seventeenth century an alderman of the city, Henry Llewellyn, left a legacy to build a further series of almshouses, on a separate site in

Priest Row, to the east of St Cuthbert's Church.

More accommodation was provided through legacies from Bishop Still and Bishop Willes and in 1637 the Bubwith site was expanded again through a legacy from Walter Brick, a Burgess of the city.

The almshouse buildings have been rebuilt many times in their history but are still known by their original names by the people of Wells.

See our website for more about us, our organisation and our buildings:

