

Secretary's report AGM 2021

As we will hear from the various reports which follow this one, things changed quite dramatically last March with the onset of lockdown. We were faced with a number of serious challenges to the way we worked, but it is great to be able to report that we were able to keep going over the last very different 18 months. This was possible because of the sterling efforts of our paid staff, as well as the development of excellent relationships and coordinated working with the Council and the Community wardens, but also due to, and this is hugely important, the commitment of time and effort from our reduced number of volunteers.

Eleanor will give you a full report about the operation of the Foodbank; my report is about what goes on behind the scenes, and the work and decisions of the Management Committee. This committee comprises the five Trustees of the Foodbank – Michael and Rona Archibald, Anne Chatt, myself and Mike Westall – augmented by our Treasurer Sonia Dixon, representatives from the Salvation Army and the Perth Christian Outreach Centre, and any team leaders who are not already Trustees.

The Management Committee have been holding regular meetings on Zoom, as there was much to discuss over the pandemic – we held 10 meetings in all, and this is the first time we have actually met together in person since last Spring. During the year, both Ivan Carnegie and Hugh O'Neill indicated their intention to retire as team leaders, and we record our grateful thanks to both of them for their faithful and committed service since the Foodbank opened in 2013. We thank them also for their contributions to the Management Committee. During the year also a number of our long-standing volunteers stood down; they had worked at the Foodbank for many years, and each received a token of our appreciation.

On the subject of Team leaders, we have been fortunate in recruiting a new volunteer Team leader, Kristine Connelly, who has been trained in the workings of the database and computer, and who has taken on this role on Friday afternoons, while Anne and myself are at the desk on Wednesdays and Tuesdays respectively

Staff-wise, in March of last year we employed another part-time driver, to do mid-week pick-ups, complementing the work which Davy did at weekends. Eleanor and Lynn-Marie are now enrolled in a pension scheme, and we have just appointed an Administrative Officer, Eleanor McGourty, who begins in the office on 6th September. This is a new post, and should help to take the load off

Eleanor, Lynn-Marie and Sonia our treasurer, as demands have grown and there are not enough hours in the day to deal with everything!

We have been able to make this appointment because of the healthy financial situation we currently find ourselves in, as you will hear later from Sonia. This also allowed us to tell the Council that we did not feel we should accept their £20,000 annual grant, which we felt could be better used in the current situation. And at this point, I want to say just what a debt of gratitude we owe to Sonia, who despite having a full-time job and family commitments, does a superb job as our Treasurer – thank you Sonia, you really are appreciated!

With regard to the premises, we have installed a sink downstairs, and improved the shelving in the reception and packing areas. In the interests of hygiene, new and easily cleaned chairs were purchased, and we now also have the services of a weekly cleaning company. During lockdown, we instigated strict protocols regarding face masks and hand-sanitising.

With regard to our Blairgowrie outlet in the St Catherine Centre, when lockdown happened, it was closed completely, though we were still able to operate in a way through the Housing Office; we were able to use the St Catherine Centre again after a few months, and I want to acknowledge the vital work which Bronia Minchin and Frances Smith have done in keeping it running when our other Coordinators, the Baileys, felt they had to stand down for family and shielding reasons. We are currently reassessing the Blairgowrie outlet, but this evening, I want to express our sincere thanks to Bronia, Frances, Andy McNee the driver and all the other volunteers in Blair.

In the lead up to Christmas, Anne Chatt, our volunteer coordinator, oversaw the making up and distribution of 120 Christmas Foodbags, and 140 Gift Bags, which were much appreciated by our clients.

The Trustees take on various roles, supplementing some of the work of our paid staff. Rona has prepared newsletters, and has also responded to schools who have chosen the Foodbank as their chosen charity in the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative. I am delighted to report that one group from Perth Grammar, won £3000 for the Foodbank, thanks to the research and presentation by Grace Corstorphine, who just happens to be the late Les Paskin's granddaughter.
(First Coordinator)

Mike Westall does a sterling job with our technology, keeping the phones and computers fully functional. Anne not only volunteers as a team leader, and helps with volunteer recruitment, but she also, during the year, took home a

parcel of food for three days to see how easy or otherwise it was to live in one of our food parcels. (Her verdict – too much tomato!)

The Trustees are also responsible for making sure we comply with Charity Law and all that OSCR and the Trussell Trust require, including making sure we have good policies on Data Protection, Safeguarding, health and safety, lone working, to name but a few.

As you know, we are affiliated to the Trussell Trust, who have served us well, with an excellent database and software, and support for staff and Trustees. After 8 years, and nudge to do so by the Trussell Trust, it is time for us to take some time to evaluate where we are, where we have come from, and where we are going – and Mike will say more about this later. We have had a number of Zoom meetings with Katy Kitchingham, our Area Coordinator, one result of which was the SWOT analysis carried out earlier this year, which some of you responded to.

In conclusion let me reiterate our sincere thanks to everybody involved with the Foodbank – to our paid staff, who go beyond the call of duty, to our friends in the Council who help us with referrals and to Liz Stewart who does a great job coordinating her own volunteers to make deliveries to Covid-related households; to our Community Wardens who helped us out so much last year, but most of all to all our wonderful volunteers – yourselves – who come in week by week, and enable Perth and Kinross Foodbank to respond to the challenges presented by Food Poverty in our community. A heartfelt thank you to you all.

Marjorie Clark

24.08.21