



# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



## The Essential Heart of Alton

Alton Community Association - Registered Charity: 266673

# SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

## **Just look what happens here in the essential heart of Alton!**

- Our well-equipped Playgroup was approved by OFSTED as "Outstanding"
- Our popular Youth Club runs three evenings a week
- We hold musical jamming sessions for young people with special needs
- We have regular social and live music events
- We host a huge Leisure Learning programme offering daytime and evening classes in a wide range of subjects
- We are home to the Alton University of the Third Age (U3A) which has over 500 members, providing courses, talks etc.
- We hire out Shop Mobility scooters by the hour, day or week to help people with walking difficulties
- We have a Community Club for the elderly providing entertainment, visits and a hot meal on two days a week
- We are home to many local services, clubs & societies.
- Our mini-bus is available for hire at competitive rates
- We have rooms of all sizes available at affordable rates.
- We set out the rooms to meet hirers' needs at no extra cost.
- Our café is open 5 days a week for coffees, lunches & teas
- We have a licensed bar which is opened for events and if required by a room hirer

**Each week about 1,000 people use the Centre, making it an essential resource for Alton and neighbouring communities**

**We will improve the Centre's appearance and facilities as funds permit**

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## Alton Community Association supporters



Hampshire County Council



East Hampshire District Council



Alton Town Council

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

### **Successes**

The past year has been exceptionally busy and successful and therefore seems to have flown by. Membership was up again from the previous year at 292 and currently we are hoping to break through our target of 300. We have also achieved a small surplus in the accounts!

East Hants. District Council cut their revenue funding by 40% this year but have promised to hold it at that for the next two. Alton Town Council, kept our grant at the previous year's level and has agreed to hold it for next year for which we are very grateful. This revenue will help us to maintain our essential services.

We have, however, been fortunate to receive more capital grant funding from both HCC and EHDC so that we have been able to continue the improvements to the ground floor.

Last year I reported that we had been able to remodel the offices and improve the heating to the Garden Room. We were also able to gain a small meeting room on the ground floor which is one of our biggest needs. This year we have started to refurbish the Ladies' and Gents' toilets and the kitchen. We still want to improve the soundproofing of the three ground floor halls but we need to call upon industry experts in this field before we can proceed with that. We do have sufficient funds to proceed when this is available so I hope to be able to report on successful completion next year.

We have had another year of successful concerts, raffles and tombola stalls, and the market which the ACA runs for Regency Day really took off this year. A new and successful project was our own ACA Fest in the Public Gardens. These events not only bring in much needed revenue; they also raise our profile in the town.

We were fortunate to be chosen as the Victorian Cricket's Charity for 2015 and were delighted to help them raise the goodly sum of £7,500 which will be used to bolster our refurbishment work. We are very grateful to them and also to Morrisons' who kindly donated £10,000.

We continue to play our part in the Community, Transport and Crime Group (CTCG) and Alton Charities Together (ACT). The Weekly Lottery which is open to all members is going well but the Gift Aid Scheme could do with more contributors.

In the Autumn we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the opening of the Centre and it was fascinating to look at the photographs taken of the reconstruction of the building and to see how it has changed over the years. It was our great pleasure to host a reception for former and current Trustees and staff, and for others who have or are continuing to support our efforts.

### **Concerns**

Hampshire County Council has continued to cut our general, unrestricted revenue grant funding year on year until we have now reached the point where we are no longer eligible to receive anything that is not tied to a specific service or project.

We know grants from the Local Authorities will get ever tighter and we are particularly concerned about the future of the Youth Club in this respect as that grant comes from HCC

### **Future plans**

I am sure our future plans will continue to be dominated by the building and how we can improve it to give a better service to the Community.

### **Thanks**

My thanks as usual go to all the staff who always work so hard for us and to our very dedicated team of Managing Trustees, although we have lost two stalwarts, Mick Wells and Mary Bunn this year. We have a winning combination at present and look forward to continuing this into the future.

**Pat Lerew, Chairman**

## **CENTRE MANAGER'S REPORT**

### **Successes**

#### **Building Improvements**

In addition to the building improvements mentioned in the Chairman's report, a team of volunteers from Laleham Healthcare decorated room 6 and our caretaking staff gave the Garden Room a fresh lick of paint. We are currently planning our improvements to the building during the next financial year, to include upgrading the toilets and café kitchen.

#### **Pre-Visible accreditation**

We have achieved our Pre-Visible accreditation which is a kite mark provided by Community Matters. This is awarded to Community Organisations that satisfy all the criteria required including holding all necessary licences, insurances, policies and procedures. We are proud to have met the high standard required to achieve this accreditation.

#### **Projects**

The Friday Night project has been running throughout the year. This project provides a safe place to be for young people hanging around in our town car parks and offers them help with any issues they may be facing.

We have helped to run the Community Festival together with the Alton Buckle and EHDC.

We also ran a Summer Activities Event with the Alton Buckle to promote all the activities on offer in our area.

This year saw the birth of ACAFEST, our first music festival in the Public Gardens. This was a great success and will be repeated next year.

#### **Summer Activities**

We ran a week of summer activities in August, funded by Radian, with a morning session for 6 – 11 years old and an afternoon slot for 11 – 16 year olds.

At the end of the week we had trips to 'Go Ape' at Alice Holt for the younger ones and Donutting at the Alpine Ski centre in Aldershot for the older group. The week went extremely well with good feedback and a full group of 6 – 11 year olds.

#### **Job Fair**

We ran a job fair this year at Bordon with transport to and from Alton and Petersfield to make it accessible to all areas. Unemployment has fallen in East Hampshire during the past year and we chose to target the neediest area to host the fair. With the army leaving Bordon there are many people seeking new employment opportunities. We had good numbers attending and plenty of local employers present.

#### **Altonian Care**

This year Altonian Care have taken over the lease of room 1 as their office base. This partnership is working well for both parties as the care agency are able to promote our Community Club for the elderly to their clients and we are benefitting from having a permanent hirer with expertise in the care sector.

#### **Fundraising**

Fundraising has gone extremely well this year with lots of regular events as well as a few new ones added to the mix. We have raised a total of £6,600 this year.

#### **Minibus**

We have been lucky enough to receive a donation from the Grace Atkinson Trust to enable us to purchase a replacement minibus and we are currently searching for a suitable vehicle.

## Concerns

- Cuts to our funding particularly for the Youth Services.
- Continuing to maintain our ageing building to modern safety standards.

## Future Plans

- Further building improvements to toilets and café kitchen.
- Replace flooring in foyer and café areas
- Improve outside appearance of building
- Respond to the needs of our Community

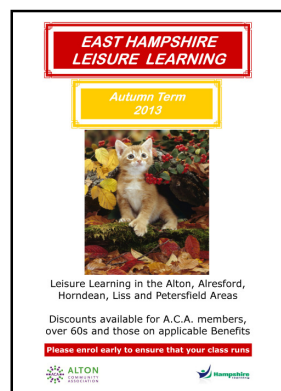
## Thank You

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Staff, Trustees and Volunteers for all their efforts over the past year. We have an amazing team who have endless enthusiasm and work tirelessly to make the centre a success.

Also a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us financially during the past year, Rotary, Lions, Alton Town Council, Radian, EHDC, HCC, Awards for All, Downlands, Bailey Thomas, Morrison's, Garfield Weston, Zurich, Sobell Foundation, The Beer Festival, Victorian Cricket Committee, Charlotte Bonham Carter Foundation, TSB and the Grace Atkinson Trust. We rely on your help to enable us to provide all the services that we offer.

**Maria Elliott, Centre Manager**

## ADULT EDUCATION (East Hants Leisure Learning)



East Hampshire Leisure Learning is the Association's Adult Education programme, we have been running for a number of years, expanding the programme where possible into different areas or with new courses. Our terms are ten weeks and we run three terms a year, each term we provide classes for on average 350 students from Alton and the surrounding areas. We are in a funding partnership with Hampshire Futures, which is part of Hampshire County Council. This level of funding and support have continued to allow us to run classes with lower numbers to get the new classes up and running and support existing classes, this has enabled us to develop and expand our programme. The 25% discount for the over 60's and the 50% discount for students on a qualifying state benefit has also been well received by our students and has been extended to the next academic year 2016/2016 along with our funding provision, after a successful commissioning bid, which we will seek to renew for 2016/2017.

- Flexibility, should students need change, due to ill health or family commitments we will always try where possible to accommodate them.
- We listen to our student's ideas or suggestions for new courses or new venues for us to run some of our existing courses should there be sufficient need for us to do so.
- Students can also continue to benefit from one off 'taster session' to see if a new course suits them, this will also give students a chance to try something a little different without the financial commitment of a full 10 week course if they are unsure.
- We will continue to offer students the discounts available to them as part of our continued funding agreement with Hampshire Futures.

## Concerns

The annual worry of continuing to secure funding and attracting new learners in these financially difficult times

## Future Plans

For the next financial year we will be planning to:

- We will be reviewing our courses and the areas courses are offered to see if there is places we can expand or improve, we will also investigate a learning partnership with Alton College to run classes at the College to take advantage of their facilities for some courses.
- Continue to seek to expand our workshops and evening courses to allow more flexibility for people with daytime commitments.
- Investigate whether there would be an interest in more 'skills for life' style courses, mindfulness, employability etc. Look at whether we can source tutors and venues to make these courses financially viable for the centre.

I would like once again to add my personal thank you to all of our Adult Learning tutors for their co-operation, their hard work and continued high standards of teaching, it is much appreciated.

**Marie Nottridge**

**Adult Education Co-ordinator**

## PLAYGROUP

Playgroup sessions run from 9.15am to 12.15 pm during school terms, with a special 4+ arrangement during the summer term, which concentrates on school readiness.

### Successes:

- Maximised use of the outside space, additional resources such as movable flower planters in the raised bed allows for imaginative use and promotes physical, expressive arts and understanding the world areas of child development.
- The local community again helped the playgroup by collecting Sainsbury active kids vouchers, the challenge this year being to raise enough to purchase a Den making kit.
- Staff have continued to attend, and pass with flying colours, all the basic required training, as well as those in specialised areas.



### Concerns

- Following the OFSTED outstanding award the need, desire and effort to maintain such as high standard can be taxing on many levels, financially, physically and emotionally.

### Plans

- Continue with staff professional development, training etc.
- Explore the implications of extending the playgroups practice, investigate early years funding options for stretched or flexible provision.

**Vicky Cox, Playgroup Supervisor**

## YOUTH CLUB

The youth club is staffed by Fleur Wareham, Karen Snowden and Julie Martin. We have one member of bank staff Stu Bogue and one volunteer Nicola Azzopardi.

- Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11-16 year olds, open access 6.30-8.30
- Thursdays school years 6 and 7, transition club 6.30-8.30
- Fridays NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) club 12.30-2.30



This year saw the launch of our transition club which has been a success, the idea of the club is to support young people moving from primary to secondary school. This at the moment is our most successful night and is getting the point we may have to split them into two groups.

### Successes

- We have been working hard in Eggars school and educated the whole of years 9, 10 and 11 in sexual education. We built the lesson plans around the needs highlighted to us by the school and then delivered them as part of the PHSE lessons.
- We have supported a young man with autism and other difficulties to socialise with other people his own age and we have seen a massive improvement in his behaviour and social skills.
- We had a trip to an indoor trampoline centre
- We ran the summer activities which were enjoyed by all who attended, we ran various activities and had a different craft every day and then ended the week with trips.

### Concerns

- The council is about to cut most if not all of our funding so the future of the club is uncertain
- Numbers can be very up and down
- The uncertainty has had a negative impact on the staff

### Future

- We hope that we will get funding to continue the club till at least September and will be applying for grants between now and then to try to keep running as much of the club as possible
- We are hoping to expand our school work and offer it out to other schools in East Hampshire.

## MEMBERSHIP

The number of members within the Association is rising slowly and is now just over 300.

Members are entitled to discounts on Adult Education course and on tickets for many events held within the Centre. Only members are allowed to vote at Annual or Extraordinary General Meetings

We expect this number to increase as the Centre facilities steadily improve.



## COMMUNITY CLUB



The numbers attending our Community Club meetings have been constant with several new members joining us.

Tai Chi and singing sessions have remained regular items on our monthly programme and we have been out to all the local tea rooms and garden centres. Unfortunately, some of the smaller, cosier places we have found have become rather expensive just for a cuppa.

We were invited to and enjoyed a lovely concert by the school children at the Alton Convent School. It fell on St. George's day and our members really enjoyed it.

The Rotary club arranged a Christmas party for us at the beginning of 2015 with musical entertainment and gifts for each member. They also funded new activities for everyday interaction and enjoyment.

The old minibus behaved quite well with only 1 or 2 day's breakdown.

Overall a good year.

A huge thank you to our volunteers and staff members helping to brighten our Community club members' lives.

**Alex Polley.**

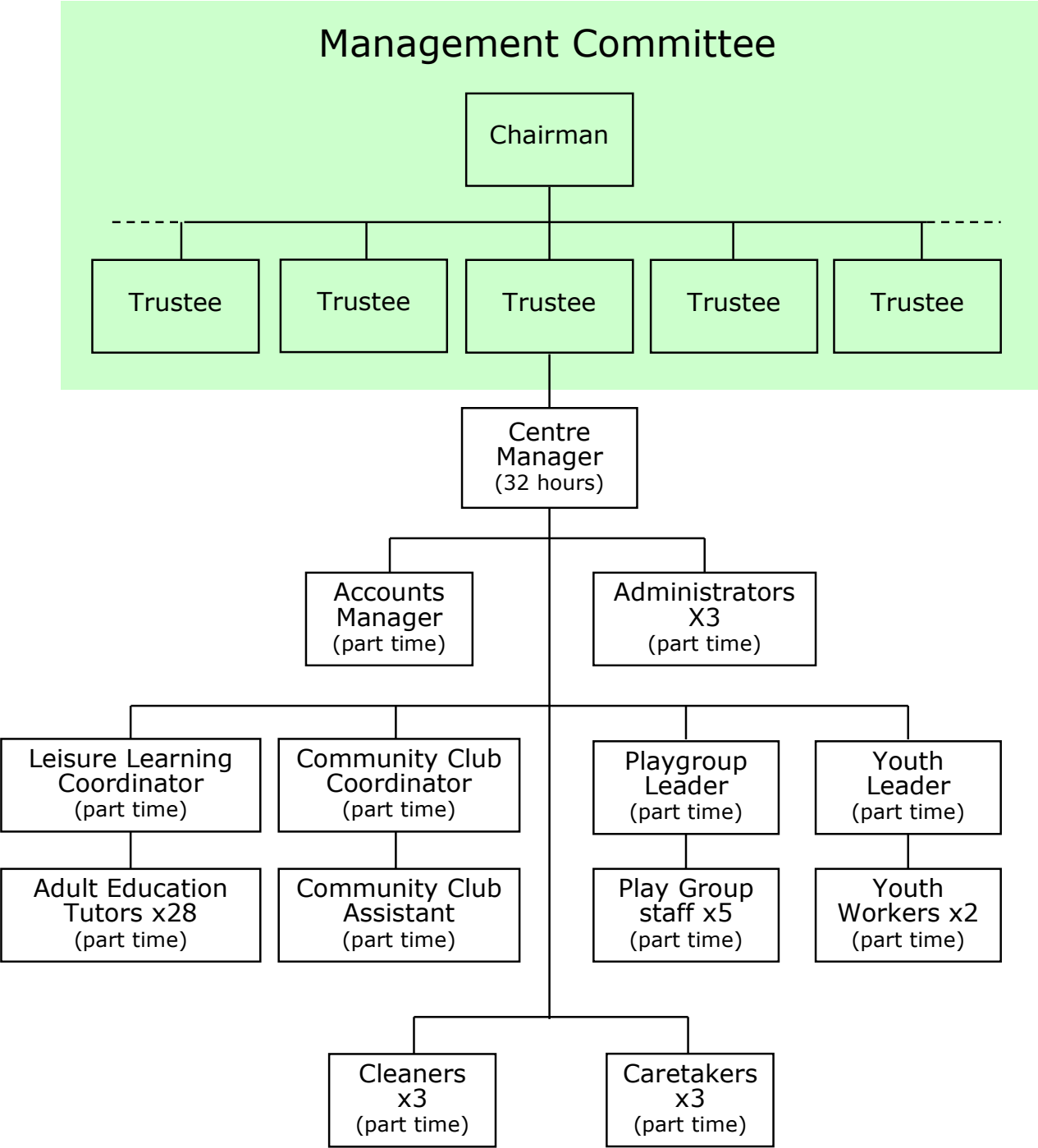
## CLUBS & SOCIETIES using ALTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Alton Community Centre is fortunate to have a number of organisations and individuals who regularly book rooms. Not only does this help to keep the centre going, but it also extends the range of services and activities available to the people of Alton. This section underlines the fact that we value our customers and to draw attention to what they are doing. We apologise if anyone has been missed out, but it should give readers a good idea of what regularly goes on.

Alanon	Alton & District Stamp Club
Alton Bottle Collectors Club	Alton Group WI
Basingstoke Substance Misuse Team	Canaan Apostolic Faith
Children's Services	Community First Job Club
Cruse	EHDC (training, polling station etc.)
East Hampshire Leisure Learning (see page 6)	Friday Prayer Group
Hampshire County Council	Hilary Bishop Dance Class
Junior Boxing Lessons	Karate Club
Loddon Alliance	Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society, Alton
Mike Heelan's Guitar Lessons	National Blood Donors
NYS Training	Pole Dancing
Princess Royal Carers Trust	Slimming World
University of the Third Age, Alton (U3A)*	Various band practices

\* The U3A is the centre's single biggest external room hirer. They hold a wide range of classes during the year for people who are 50+. The course programme includes 45 different class topics, nearly all held at the Community Centre.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



Insert accounts here



# The Essential Heart of Alton

**Alton Community Association**  
Amery Street, Alton, Hampshire. GU34 1HN  
Registered Charity 266673

