OX10 COMMUNITY CENTRE LIMITED
Report of AGM and Visioning Meeting
Held on 27th March 2024 at 18.30 hrs at The George Hotel

Present: Vicki Baker, Rosalia Barresi, James Barlow, Tony Fletcher, Linda Francis, Amanda Griffin, John Griffin, Georgina Groome, Nigel Hughes, Lucienne de Mauny, Landy Nye, Len Pannett, Shona Powrie, Catherine Somerville, Lucy Jane Verhoeven

Apologies: Melanie Chandler, Ina Codrington, Richard Harding, Steve Holder, Phillip Koomen, Chris Moss, Kate Spence

Reminder of our Aim

To provide a welcoming, flexible, indoor space in the centre of Wallingford where we can meet each other and work together.

Where have we got to?

The annual and financial reports (previously circulated) were discussed.

In 2022 we concentrated on trying to buy 2, Market Place.

In 2023 we raised our profile by:

- active participation in existing events
- collaboration with other organisations
- bringing together organisations with similar goals (e.g. those wanting to improve youth provision in Wallingford, those wanting a community allotment)
- organising community events to illustrate the types of things that could happen regularly if we just had a community-owned space

We have had a very positive response to the events that we ran during 2023 and many suggestions and ideas from our members and others about events people would like to see happen e.g. 'Green Screen' Film Showings, Climate Cafe's, River Water Quality Roundtable, Talk at May Fayre at Brazier's Park, Sewing Repair Cafe's, Great Big Green Week, Eden Project Big Lunch, Jo Cox Great Get Together, further Cafe Scientifique and Community Spotlight Sessions, Democracy Cafe's etc and we are increasingly receiving requests to have an outreach presence at events, as we did last year (i.e. Wallingford Carnival & Septembersong Festival).

We spent some time in small groups and then came together.

We agreed the following:

Things we are all concerned about:

- Most community buildings in Wallingford are under-used, some of them seriously.
- Building owners are suspicious of offers of help or support from other organisations to increase usage and there is a general lack of trust.

(A reflection of our society at this time, not just Wallingford).

It was agreed that

- Putting on events when you do not have a base is much harder work.
- The following criteria for selecting a property are reasonable.

Preferred criteria for pursuing a property project

Location:	1. Centre of town
	2. If less central, to North of town
Accessibility:	Level entrance or space for ramp
	Level throughout
	Accessible toilet or space to provide one
Fire Safety:	Two entrances
Potential:	Two rooms minimum
	One at least large enough for 30 people seated
	Kitchen area or space to put one.
	Outside space
	Can earn its own running costs

Particularly that a building must be able to earn its own operating costs. (This removes 3, Castle Street from the frame.)

There was some discussion about location and we did not have a common view.

We considered three possible streams of work:

1. Buy a property to become a permanent community centre

We considered the properties in the table below against the agreed criteria:

4, Market Place: In the best location and with the most potential, but depends on how much work is required to make it safe. We agreed to continue to monitor this and commission a surveyor to report on what work is required when we can book a viewing.

3, Castle Street: Main difficulty is lack of room for hiring space out e.g. hot desking, pop-up shops, storage. i.e. little scope for building to earn its way.

24, St Mary's Street: A great deal of potential, but needs an investigation of condition of timber frame. It is at the wrong end of town and over-priced.

Property project selection criteria		4, Market Place £1.9 - £3m	3, Castle Street £275,000	24, St Mary's St £950,000
Location:	**1.** Centre of town	✓	✓	**X**
	2. If less central to North of town			**X**
Accessibility: With thanks to MIGWAL for feedback	Level entrance or space for ramp	✓	✓	✓
	Level throughout	✓	✓	**X**
	Accessible toilet (AT) or	✓	✓	✓
	Space to provide AT	✓	✓	✓
Fire Safety:	Two entrances	✓	**X**	✓
Potential:	Two rooms minimum	✓	✓	✓
	One large enough for 30 seated	✓	✓	**X**
	Kitchen area or space to put one.	✓	✓	✓
	Outside space	✓	**X**	✓
	Can earn its own running costs	✓	**X**	✓
Condition:		Structurally Poor	Needs work on kitchen and toilet	Needs work on kitchen and toilet
Notes:		Difficult to get information	Possibility to negotiate with WTC for use of 2 car parking spaces. Possibility to make rear entrance	Access to this building along St Mary's Street, is very poor. Wrong end of town?

Other property suggestions include the existing sites of St Nicholas School and the Medical Centre (wrong end of town) after they have been re-located. We are in contact with the Oxfordshire Diocesan Schools Trust which appears to be the decision maker about the school site and shall continue to explore this.

We did not agree about how much redevelopment of the Regal Centre might pose a threat to viability of a future community centre.

2. Rent a property on a meanwhile use basis, to get started

On the whole landlords and estate agents are completely un-interested in discussing these possibilities. We note that many empty retail units are not even being advertised. We conjectured that distant landlords are happy to keep commercial properties empty in the hope of being allowed to convert them to residential before too long. This would destroy the

vibrancy and viability of our town centre and undermine the character of our town. We did not come to a conclusion about whether it is worthwhile to try to get "meanwhile" use of any of the empty retail properties in the town, but agreed to pursue the request to have a short let of 20, St Mary's Street (ex Bridal Shop).

3. **Joint projects with owners of existing properties**, e.g. scouts, Wallingford Community Association, WTC?

We spent a great deal of time and energy in 2023 attempting to set up partnerships with other organisations in Wallingford. Even when we were approached by the organisations themselves, we have found that their Trustees have been apparently alarmed by our can-do, problem-solving approach. This has been both exhausting and disappointing.

This was not discussed for long, but the attendees agreed that these attempts had drained time and energy from the organisation.

Future Strategy

The existing Directors cannot continue with the existing structure.

The Company Secretary:	Tony Fletcher
The Treasurer:	Shona Powrie
The Membership Secretary:	Catherine Somerville

The above role holders have all resigned (though the Treasurer has agreed to complete the work to manage the SODC Food and Warmth Grant).

We are grateful for the work that these founder members have contributed to OX10CC. Thank you so much. We know that we can count on your continued support.

It is a legal requirement for us to have the first two roles filled.

It was agreed that OX10CC needs to ask for help in specific roles to attract active supporters.

It was agreed that OX10CC needs to do more to publicise what we have done and how effective we have been, more widely.

The core team have decided that for the next few months of 2024, OX10CC will:

- continue to monitor possible premises and sources of funding
- actively seek people to fill specific roles
- not run any events
- publicise what we have already achieved and remind people of what the community could do if we only had a base to work from.