

HLCC - a brief report

The Community Centre has had a very good year. We have had two grants from the Community Infrastructure Levy [CIL] allowing us to replace old furniture and to buy a new projector and sound equipment for a free film club, now running fortnightly thanks to our lovely volunteers. The CIL money has also allowed us to purchase a new fridge and freezer for the kitchen, supporting the successful lunch clubs on Mondays and Fridays. Our fantastic cook, Lulu, manages every week to produce culinary marvels for just £3.50, and allows people of all ages to come together and socialise on a regular basis. We also have CCTV installed to ensure the security of everyone who comes to use the centre.

The clubs and classes running at the hall include yoga, judo, meditation, Zumba and Pilates for people recovering from cancer. We also have a regular teacher of the violin who comes in three times a week. Classes and all our activities are posted on our website, which has been set up and maintained for us by Eugene, who has been doing this task for us for free for some years.

The Nursery, which is being run for us by Queen's Crescent Community Association has been recently increasing the intake of babies and toddlers thanks to the new nursery manager, Muna, and is having no trouble maintaining its "Good" status according to OFSTED. The children are happy and well looked after, and we hope that we can find opportunities for the children to perhaps come up to the Community Centre at lunch times occasionally, to share lunch and talk to the other regular lunch club attendees.

Since 2013, the hall has been renovated, refurbished and run through the efforts of volunteers - as we have been getting more and more requests for the use of the hall, we felt that we really needed someone to be at the hall at least some of the time on a regular basis, and to this end we put in a bid for a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. Much to our delight, we were recently told that we have been awarded this grant, a little over £112,000, which will allow us to employ a manager for three days a week for three years. The task of this new manager will be to continue fund raising, with a particular view to acquiring funds to continue his or her employment beyond the three years, and to promote and establish projects at the centre to bring even more members of the community together, both young and not so young. These projects could include access to computers and help to use them, drop in sessions for advice on a variety of topics, arts and crafts, afternoon teas or homework help and leisure activities for young people.

We are waiting to hear from our funding manager from the Big Lottery, who will be setting up an induction meeting with us so that we are fully informed about our responsibilities regarding the money, after which we should be able to advertise for candidates for the post. There should be exciting times ahead!

Meanwhile, I would like to give a huge vote of thanks to the fantastic members of the Committee who give their time to opening and closing the hall when it is hired, who wash tablecloths, do the accounting, monitor the phone and emails, and generally do all that is needed to support the smooth running of the hall, and to all of the other volunteers who come regularly to the lunch clubs and whose hard work and smiling faces mean so much to those who come.

Barbara Smith

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