

BRIDGES

(Charity No. 1029169)

**Trustees Report & Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

BRIDGES

(Charity No. 1029169)

Trustees and Officers who served during 2023

TRUSTEES

Richard Dyson - Chairman
David CW Stafford
Barbara Abel
Michael Musgrove - Secretary
Susan E Oldfield

TREASURER

John Southworth

CENTRE MANAGER

Mary Perrett

CENTRE TREASURER

Elizabeth Richmond

CENTRE COMMITTEE

Mary Perrett – Chair
Stella Bundred
Dot Francis
Janet Lewis
Marylynne Lolley
Michael Musgrove
Chrissie Stephens
Dorothy Sutton
Judy Webb

CONSULTANTS

Ronald V Sutton
Dorothy Sutton

ADDRESS

Bridges Centre
High Street
Edenbridge
Kent TN8 5AJ

Telephone 01732 868186

BRIDGES

(Charity No. 1029169)

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2023

Objectives

BRIDGES was established as a registered charity in 1993. It purchased and refurbished a former chapel in the centre of the High Street, Edenbridge, Kent in order to fulfil its core purpose of running an ecumenical Centre for the benefit of the whole community.

Staffed by volunteers under the supervision of a paid manager, the BRIDGES Centre offers a familiar and accessible place for people to meet, a listening ear, friendship, rest and refreshment, with particular regard for the needs of parents with young children, the aged, the unemployed and those who are lonely or distressed. Its aim is to bring together all sections of the community to their mutual benefit as visitors or volunteers, without discrimination, and to 'bridge the gaps' in local provision that are not being addressed by existing statutory or voluntary agencies. To that end BRIDGES provides specialist advice clinics, which give local people access to information and services without needing to travel to larger towns.

BRIDGES aims to demonstrate Christian faith in action through creating a welcoming community where anyone can find, or be, a 'good neighbour'. It maintains a Christian ethos of inclusivity and service, and encourages people to develop their creative and practical abilities.

BRIDGES priorities are:

- to overcome social isolation and strengthen communities
- to co-operate with other local organisations
- to build a sense of worth in volunteers and visitors alike
- to help find solutions to pressing personal needs
- to encourage Christians in the practice of their faith
- to create sustainable communities both locally and globally
- to encourage understanding and tolerance between people of different faiths and backgrounds

BRIDGES is committed to implementing high standards of care to volunteers and visitors who are children or vulnerable adults and, additionally, to ensuring that its policies and procedures meet current legislative requirements. There have been no breaches of BRIDGES safeguarding standards reported to the trustees in 2023.

Organisational Structure

The Trustees met six times in 2023, to review strategy, policies and finance, and to receive reports from committees and working groups chaired by Trustees.

The BRIDGES Centre Committee (BCC), chaired jointly by the manager and a trustee, oversees the day-to-day running of the Centre on a daily basis. Volunteers become members of BRIDGES after a period of three months' service, and elect at the Annual Review up to seven of their number to serve on the BCC.

Activities During 2023

2023 saw a welcome increase in the pace of BRIDGES' post-Covid recovery. Visitor numbers continued to grow, and several new volunteers were recruited for the Community Café bringing the total number of helpers to about 50. However, this was still not enough to offer lunches daily, so the opening hours Mon-Thurs remained at 10-12.30. The Friday lunchtime shift merged into the Place of Welcome, offering free refreshments and a Warm Space for anyone to drop in to socialise or find information. The monthly Saturday Markets have been well supported, but finding helpers to open every Saturday has been unsuccessful.

A survey of visitor numbers in November 2023 showed at least 140 different people visited BRIDGES Community Café that week (excluding volunteers). 42% of Visitors came at least weekly, with 1 in 3 coming several times a week, indicating that BRIDGES played an important

part in their lives. 42% of respondents were aged 67-79 with 25% being over 80, and 32% having a disability of some kind.

In the afternoons, **Creative Café** continued to offer monthly informal art therapy sessions. **Dandelion Café** extended its invitation to lunch and sociable entertainment, to residents living at Edenbridge Manor, the new residential care home, and at Home Farm Trust, because transport for those living with dementia in the community was difficult to find. The Friday afternoon **Place of Welcome** continued to grow in popularity, and more men have joined in. The monthly **Folk Music** sessions have been full to capacity! On Wednesday mornings the Centre was abuzz with activities, **Knit & Natter** occupying one corner, the **Health Walkers** sitting at several tables enjoying post-walk refreshments, and the **Crosslight** Debt Advisor available in the privacy of the Quiet Room. **Hi-Kent** succeeded in recruiting more volunteers to hold two sessions per month at BRIDGES from September, to meet the demand. **Girl Guiding** began a new Edenbridge branch at BRIDGES, while BRIDGES' term time Lego Club and the Grace Community Church's **Laser Light Club** continue to be popular among children aged 6-11. **Alcoholics Anonymous**, and **Narcotics Anonymous**, offer invaluable support to adults from a wide area.

Monthly exhibitions by local artists continued to provide interest for visitors and a chance to buy original paintings. BRIDGES is particularly indebted to the late Terry Carter for allowing his artwork to be used on BRIDGES' website, and for the great pleasure his paintings have given visitors over many years. His last visit to BRIDGES was to the celebration of **Mary Perrett's 20th anniversary** as BRIDGES' Manager. She was rendered speechless with delight to be presented with one of his pictures! Earlier in the year **Sevenoaks District Council** awarded Mary a **Youth and Community Award**, for Making a Difference, with the **New Youth Café** she organised at BRIDGES to support young people affected by the isolation of Covid Lockdowns. BRIDGES not only retained its **5* certificate for Food Hygiene**, but was also chosen as **SDCs Voluntary Group of the Year!**

Trustees took time for a **Strategy Review** in the Spring, to identify priorities for the next year and 5 years. Building Maintenance will require significant funding, and consideration will be given to paying staff to open on Saturdays, as it has been so difficult to recruit volunteers. It was agreed to recruit a Deputy Manager as soon as possible. Huge increases in Utility prices, a faulty smart meter, and the closure of the local Post Office had serious unwelcome consequences for BRIDGES, making time-consuming extra demands on staff and volunteers. Our new Treasurer John Southworth aims to improve the use of IT throughout management, and we were delighted to welcome Deborah Garden to the Trustee Board, with her wealth of experience in Youth Work, Charity governance, and grant applications. Trustees are deeply grateful to Kent Community Foundation, the Great Stone Bridge Trust, Sevenoaks District Council, Edenbridge Town Council, Hever Parish Council, local churches, Rochester Diocese, Drake Oil Syndicate, Casey & Associates, Edenbridge Bonfire Society and many local organisations and individuals for their financial and practical assistance to BRIDGES. The Annual Quiz Night, Plant Sale, Pre-loved Clothing sale, and Christmas Lottery, contributed significantly to BRIDGES' financial sustainability.

In the year that the local hospital closed and the new medical centre opened, BRIDGES' town centre location and close links with the Food Bank and Citizens' Advice, provided excellent opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of Edenbridge residents. The visitor survey identified that over 80% of visitors felt that coming to BRIDGES relieved their loneliness, provided helpful information, and helped them find friendship, improving their quality of life as they faced the relentless unprecedented changes of the digital revolution, and cost of living crises. We look forward to developing this work as BRIDGES enters its 30th year of service to the community.

Financial Results

2023 saw the finances of the charity remaining stable. The café had a full years activity with visitors and volunteers returning.

Overall the trust's activities resulted in a surplus of £12,293 (2022:surplus £16,949), with total funds standing at £295,226 (2022 £292,772) at the year-end. Of this total £221,094 (2022: £221,094) related to fixed assets and £74,132 (2022 £71,678) to unrestricted reserves, available for use by the trustees as the need arises. Restricted funds represent the balances remaining unspent against 6 conditional grants, totalling £2,424 (2022 : £9,839).

The detailed 2023 financial statements are set out on pages 6 to 7 that follow.

Reserves Policy

It is an objective of the Trustees to set a financial plan each year and to ensure that operating costs are covered annually by the receipt of income from the Centre, together with donations, grants and fundraising activities.

The Trustees believe that the charity should hold in unrestricted reserves a sufficient cushion of funds to enable it to:

- a) meet the cost of exceptional expenditure that may be incurred from time to time on major maintenance or improvements to the BRIDGES Centre and/or
- b) continue to exist in a period of reduced income and, should it be necessary, to cease to operate and wind up in an orderly fashion.

The Trustees consider that the desirable level of reserves for this purpose to be one year's operating costs and £30,000 for the building repairs and plan to generate annual operating surpluses in order to build reserves to this level, without impairing the quality of services provided. At 31 December 2023, the Trustees' unrestricted reserves of £74,132 less £30,000 net £44,132 represented 81% of the operating costs.

Statement of Trustees Responsibilities

Under the trust deed of the charity and charity law, the Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations. The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the excess of income over expenditure for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, generally accepted accounting practice entails that the Trustees:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- state whether the financial statements comply with the trust deed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are required by law to act in accordance with the trust deed of the charity, within the framework of trust law. They are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, sufficient to disclose at any time with reasonable accuracy, the financial position of the charity at that time, and to enable the Trustees to ensure that, where any statements of account are prepared by them under section 132(1) of the Charities Act 2011, those statements of accounts comply with the requirements of regulations under that provision. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the charity and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the BRIDGES Trust (Charity No. 1029169)

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 1 to 6

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility:

- to examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act) and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

D Bellwood

The Bridges Centre Financial Activities January - December 2023

	Centre Restricted		Total	
			Jan - Dec 2023	Jan - Dec 2022
Income				
1 Sales	27,496		27,496	22,627
2 Centre Hiring Charges	3,579		3,579	1,365
3 Donations	6,095		6,095	8,183
4 Tax recovered	909		909	495
5 Fundraising and Events	5,164		5,164	5,441
6 Grants	13,773		13,773	29,503
7 Grants - Dandelion	0	8,814	8,814	
8 Grants - Place of welcome	2,802		2,802	
9 Grants Creative cafe	0	3,071	3,071	52
90 Grants - Kent Community	6,000		6,000	
91 Bank Interest	745		745	340
Revaluation of Investments	0			-971
Total Income	66,563	11,885	78,448	67,035
Expenditures				
11 Purchases	5,424		5,424	3,637
12 Utilities	12,102		12,102	3,800
14 Repairs and Maintenance	1,187		1,187	948
15 Insurance	2,399		2,399	2,172
16 Cleaning supplies	1,197		1,197	355
21 Staff Costs	28,999		28,999	24,338
22 Office/General Administrative Expenditures	236		236	440
24 Marketing	1,349		1,349	0
25 Stationery	35		35	564
26 Sundries	82		82	664
27 Training	349		349	203
28 Small equipment	280		280	52
30 Dandelion	0	8,814	8,814	8,009
31 Creative Art Workshops	0	3,071	3,071	1,594
32 Crosslight	500		500	
33 Creative kids	20		20	248
40 Bank charges	112		112	12
Depreciation	0			3,050
Total Expenditures	54,271	11,885	66,156	50,086
Net Operating Income	12,293	0	12,293	16,949

The Bridges Centre
BALANCE SHEET as at 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Freehold Property Bridges Hall	221,094	221,094
Cash funds	66,582	61,996
Investments	8,174	8,174
Prepayments	1,800	3,019
	76,556	73,189
Creditors	- 2,424 -	1,511
Unrestricted Reserves	74,132	71,678
Total Funds	295,226	292,772