CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 01/06/2025 To 31/05/2026

Charity name: The Downswood Community Association

Charity registration number: 298218

Objectives and Activities

	SORP reference	
Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document	Para 1.17	As per the Constitution, the charity exists: "To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Downswood without distinction of sex, political, religious or other opinions, by providing facilities for education, recreation, and leisure-time activities in the interest of social welfare."
Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.	Para 1.17 and 1.19	The Association provides a valuable community resource by managing the Downswood Community Centre for the benefit of local residents, groups and organisations.
Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit	Para 1.18	The trustees confirm that they have had due regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives, and in planning and delivering activities throughout the year.

Achievements and Performance

	SORP reference	
Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.	Para 1.20	During the year, the Association continued to manage and hire out the Downswood Community Centre. The Centre is used regularly by local groups for social, recreational, and educational purposes. Private hirings continue to provide an important income stream. During the year the Association acquired 250 chairs and a tree bench for use in connection with the community facilities.

Financial Review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period	Para 1.21	Accounts Basis: The accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, as permitted under section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 for charities with income under £250,000. Review of the Year: The charity maintained a strong financial position through regular hall hire and prudent cost control. Significant spending during the year related to general maintenance and minor improvements.
Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held	Para 1.22	The charity holds cash reserves equivalent to approximately 6 months of regular operating costs, in line with prudent financial practice. These reserves are held to manage fluctuations in hall hire income and unexpected maintenance costs.
Amount of reserves held	Para 1.22	£31,822
Reasons for holding zero reserves	Para 1.22	n/a
Details of fund materially in deficit	Para 1.24	n/a
Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern	Para 1.23	n/a

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of charity's trusts:		
Type of governing document	Para 1.25	Constitution adopted 18 April 2000
How is the charity constituted?	Para 1.25	An unincorporated association governed by its Constitution.
Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees	Para 1.25	Trustees are nominated, seconded, and approved by the General Committee.

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	The Downswood Community Association
Other name the charity uses	DCA
Registered charity number	298218
Charity's principal address	c/o 92 Longham Copse Maidstone Kent ME15 8TW

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	John Everett	Chair		
2	Diane Everett			
3	Ivan Russell			
4	Valarie Saunders			
5	Rosanna Cronin			
6	Sue Haigh		09/09/2025	
7	Jim Carmichael			
8	Bernard Dunn			
9	Scott Raffle			
10	Lorraine Rowe			
11	Jessica Arundel			
12	Katie Simpson			
14	Nicky Clifford			
15	Martin Weeks			

Corporate trustees – names of the directors at the date the report was approved

Director name		
n/a		

Name of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity

Trustee name	Dates acted if not for whole year	
n/a		

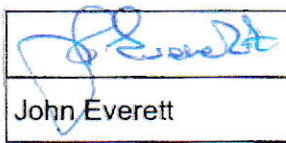
Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

Description of the assets held in this capacity	Not applicable
Name and objects of the charity on whose behalf the assets are held and how this falls within the custodian charity's objects	
Details of arrangements for safe custody and segregation of such assets from the charity's own assets	

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	John Everett	
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Chair	
Date	22.09.26	

Chairman's AGM report 2026

For the benefit of the Charity Commission, the Downswood Community Association was established in 1986 by local residents. It consists of a General Committee, a fundraising committee to plan fundraising events and a management team who look after the day to day running of the community centre.
When the community association was established, they negotiated with the developers, George Wimpey and Maidstone Borough Council, to provide various facilities, community services and activities which would make an enormous difference to the well-being of the new community of Downswood.
One of these facilities was a community centre which was built and finally opened in 1990.

The community centre is owned by Maidstone Borough Council, but volunteers from the Downswood Community Association have exclusively and successfully managed the centre since the opening in October 1990.
The Downswood Community Centre is managed in a professional, business-like manner to ensure it is legally safe, maintained and cleaned to a very high standard.
The Downswood Community Association receives no regular grants whatsoever to manage the centre and income is from hiring fees and fundraising events only.
All utility bills, maintenance, licences, permits, repairs and renewals must be paid for by the tenants, the general committee of Downswood Community Association.

The centre is open daily between 08.00 and 23.00 hours, and we have many regular groups who hire the centre on weekdays, with the weekends being available for private hirings;
Bonsai Club (Wednesday evenings, once a month)
Brain Training (Friday afternoons)
Downswood Crafty Ladies Group, DCA Section (every Wednesday afternoon)
Downswood Community Association Fundraising Committee (Tuesday evenings, once a month)
Downswood Badminton Club, DCA Section (Mon and Thurs evenings)
Downswood Community Association General Committee, (Tuesday evenings, every three months)
Downswood Retirement Club, affiliated group, (Friday afternoons)
Downswood Short Mat Bowls Club, DCA Section, (Mon. and Wed) Afternoons)
Flower Arranging, (Tuesday mornings)
HOK Gaming Group (Friday evenings) Kent School of Bridge, (Tuesday afternoons)
Kidz Kung Fu, Affiliated Group, (Mon-Thurs. Evenings)
Maidstone Lions, (Tuesday's, once a month)
Pilates, (Tuesday evenings)
Willow Rise Pre School, Affiliated Group, (Daily, Monday - Friday)
Willington Players Drama Group, Affiliated Group, (Mon. and Thurs Evenings).

Sadly, we have lost the following groups over the past year: East Sutton Community Youth Theatre, the Shukokai Karate Academy, the Stay and Play Mother and Toddler group and Downswood Parish Council, who now hold their meetings at Otham Church. When we asked them why, we were told they want to support the DCA and Otham Church.

New groups that have started over the past year are the Heart of Kent gaming group who hire the whole centre on a Friday evening and Baskin Babies who are in the lounge on a Thursday morning.
Kidz Kung Fu are also in on a Saturday morning now, as long as there are no large weekend parties.

We have a new care taking service from Peter Williams, a local resident, along with Vanessa who supplies our booking secretary services and Gary and Emma who supply the cleaning services.

So what have the Downswood Community Association charity trustees achieved over the past twelve months?
We have kept the Downswood Community Centre open by managing it to the best of our ability and to a very high standard for all the many groups I have previously mentioned and for all the weekend private kiddies parties, family gatherings, religious celebrations, other meetings and other activities.
We have made ourselves available for advice for residents and we are not saying we solved all their problems but we definitely pointed them in the right direction.

Once again we were contacted by the Charity Commission this year after they received an anonymous complaint about our accounts not being in order and the fact that we haven't had a volunteer Treasurer for some years.
They had no practical answer as to how we can recruit a volunteer Treasurer.

There were no problems whatsoever with the DCA accounts but as we used a different auditor since last year he submits the accounts in a slightly different way which has now been explained to the Charity Commission.

An anonymous complaint was also sent to Maidstone Borough Council telling them that we didn't have permission to have a bench at the front of the centre. We did in fact have permission from the Corporate Property Manager the previous year which they hadn't bothered to check.
People are welcome to criticise the DCA but to avoid wasting people's time and making themselves look pathetic they should get their facts correct first.

Over the past 40 years we have built a family of friendly volunteers who have worked hard for the Downswood Community Association and who are invaluable to the residents of Downswood by keeping the Community Centre up and running and always willing to help residents in any way possible, long may it continue.
I applaud the fundraising team who do a fantastic job organising events for local residents and to everyone who does come along and help us, we should thank each and every one of them for all their hard work.

All the funds we raise go towards the upkeep of the centre but we sometimes find it difficult to attract people to our events, which is we are always looking for new volunteers, not just with new ideas and suggestions. We need people to help us run these events, which can be hard work.

Here's a list of the fundraising events we have had throughout the year since January 2026, (all of which raised much needed funds):
Murder Mystery (28th February)
Easter Egg Hunt (5th April)
Downswood Summer Fete (6th June)
Dolls House Fair (DCA ran the refreshments) (26th July)
Downswood Bar B Q (15th August).
& for the rest of the year we already have planned;
Quiz Night (25th September)
Drag Night (DCA to run the refreshments) (11th October)
Halloween Party (31st October)
Christmas Fayre (6th December)
Wreathmaking (12th December)

Brief notes on the accounts:
I can't explain too much about the audited accounts because James Fisher does a fantastic job preparing these not just for the Charity Commission but for us and any residents who wish to see them.

The pages headed 'Receipts & payments accounts' are very similar to our three monthly spreadsheet which is produced at every general committee meeting and this explains the income and expenditure for the whole year up from 01st June 2025 up to 31st May 2026.
Good news is that our overall total income for the year (or receipts as it is on the sheet) of £63,774 was up on the previous year by £3,584 with our two main incomes of bookings up by £7,141 and fundraising was also up by £186.
With the added bonus of £19,999 grant from the National Lottery Community Fund for our new chairs.

Our total expenditure for the year (or payments as it is on the sheet) was up by £2,945.
This means expenditure on repairs and renewal down was by £1,036.
Fundraising expenses were up by £1,654.
Licenses and insurance were up by £1,218.
Utilities, (gas/electric/water etc) only increased by £262.
Wages (or payments for services) were up by £301, as we pay for the services of a booking secretary, a caretaker and two cleaners.
All other expenditure was approximately the same as the previous year other than as mentioned the new chairs (£18732) and the tree bench at the front of the centre (£1265).

Overall income this years income up to 31st May 2026 was £63774, with expenditure of £57165
Last year our income was £60190 with expenditure of £54220.

This Trustees annual report was agreed by the general committee on 22.09.26 & ready to send to the charity commission.