

**Lisburn Downtown Centre  
AGM 2023-2024  
Chair's Report**

Thank you all for coming to this year's AGM, my second as Chair.

I am not going to detail the work that has taken place or how we have secured and managed the funding to make it happen, as this will be set out in subsequent reports. However, it is suffice to say that the range of activities and level of participation has grown throughout the year largely as a result of being able to employ two members of staff. There are many other benefits to this "Two Coordinator" approach which we will endeavour to sustain if funding permits. One of the big wins is the world-famous Downtown Choir!

Last September, the management committee held a strategic review meeting where we updated our Values and Mission Statement. Subsequently we further developed a 3-5 year strategic plan which you will hear more about later. A copy is included in your pack.

We are currently reviewing our governance arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose and comply with the requirements of the NI Charity Commission. Specifically, we are reviewing our constitution and developing a risk register as well as updating all our policies. The committee undertook some governance training this spring and we are grateful to LCCC for funding this training.

It is also vital that Downtown itself undertakes fundraising activities. We have recently held our second annual Table Quiz – this time in the Crafty Hound - which has raised over £1600. It also provided with an opportunity to publicise the work of the Centre to more than 100 people and have a good night's craic. We are grateful to the Lambeg Players for providing us a fund-raising opportunity by selling tickets for their pantomime – Snow White and the Seven Merrie Men – in January and for donating half of their traditional "orange bucket" collection. Between these two we raised almost £1000. Other fund raisers included supporters running the Belfast marathon in May raising almost £3000 and our members undertaking a sponsored walk in Wallace Park raising almost £600.

Since last year's AGM we have had further changes to our management committee. Ted Parks has stood down after many years excellent service and his place as a FLPC representative has been taken by Deborah Balnave. Caroline McGrath, who brought additional professional expertise, has also had to step down from the committee. We are still keen to recruit a couple of additional members to our management committee and our looking for individuals who will bring an additional skill set to our team. In particular we are keen to recruit someone who has an active Social Work background. If anyone knows anyone who might be interested and bring additional expertise to the committee please speak to Jill, Rebecca, Janet or myself.

We have also lost the support and involvement of Rev John Brackenridge who retired as minister of FLPC at the end of last year. John has been a terrific supporter of Downtown throughout this time – we could not undertake the work we do without such support. We are grateful for the support of Rev David Bruce, Convenor of the Vacancy, over this past year and hope that a new minister will be appointed during the year ahead. Whilst we are an independent charity, it is vital that we in Downtown maintain a supportive and cooperative relationship with FLPC, something that has characterised the past 30+ years.

In conclusion I would just like to thank Jill and Rebecca for the tremendous work they do for us, we would not be as successful without their dedication, enthusiasm and drive. I would also like to thank the other members of the management committee and in particular our Secretary, Janet, and Treasurer, Richard, and all the many volunteers who support our members.

Thank you

JH Brown  
November 2024