

EAST BELFAST MISSION

TRUSTEES REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's [governing document], the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019).

The Board expresses deep gratitude to its 90 staff and 100 volunteers for their hard work and efficiency in the day to day administration of the Mission's programmes and services.

Objectives and activities

East Belfast Mission's current Strategic Plan articulated our main aim, which is 'to provide love and leadership in East Belfast. The delivery of this strategic aim, includes the following core priorities.

Christian Community

To respond to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the congregation and wider community.

Welcoming Facility

To provide a welcoming and safe space where people can find appropriate information and social support.

Neighbourhood Services

To ensure that individuals in the community have access to appropriate services and training to respond to their needs.

Homelessness Services

To ensure that people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness have an effective response to their needs.

Employability Services

To support people in their progression in gaining and sustaining appropriate employment.

Community Initiatives

To promote the development of the whole community.

Public benefit

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

The purpose of East Belfast Mission is the advancement of the Christian Faith as understood by the Methodist Church in Ireland and for the promotion for the public benefit and social good of East Belfast, being an area of social and economic deprivation. The objectives of East Belfast Mission will have the following public benefits:

- (i) the relief of poverty in such ways as may be thought fit;
- (ii) the relief of unemployment in such ways as may be thought fit including assistance to find employment;
- (iii) the advancement of education, training or retraining, particularly among unemployed people, and providing unemployed people with work experience;
- (iv) the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill health, disability financial hardship or other disadvantage.

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Achievements and performance

Significant activities and achievements against objectives

The board wish to take this opportunity to review EBM's performance over the past year and report on the work of the organisation, which continues to seek to work with everyone in the East Belfast Community. In 2023 East Belfast Mission successfully pursued the second year of its current Strategic Plan to 'provide love and leadership in East Belfast'.

During 2023 East Belfast Mission strengthened its in internal Financial Systems, including changing to latest generation Financial Software. This has seen some legacy internal financial processes and controls which were paper-based move online and directly linked into the Mission's accounting software.

In 2023, we supported the community in six ways, providing:

A PLACE OF SHELTER – We delivered lifesaving shelter and support at our hostel, prevented homelessness through our Tenancy Support Service, provided community projects to some of the most excluded people in our society, supported our clients facing poverty with direct financial help, and created new housing options for people experiencing homelessness through Hosford Community Homes.

A PLACE TO EAT – thanks to the Belfast City Council, we supplied food to over 200 households. We maintained the Meals on Wheels service, providing a hot nutritious lunch, through 100 days of lockdown.

A PLACE TO TALK – with the support of EBM church members and EBM employees, we phoned people associated with the Mission who might be in danger of being isolated and ensured contact was maintained; and for those with deeper issues, our Care Counsellors offered phone call listening.

A PLACE TO LEARN – Aspire Homework Project helped children with home schooling via Zoom, and then, as lockdown eased, kids had a chance to meet up. Turas had an additional 300 online learners.

A PLACE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT- our mentors continued to find training and employment opportunities, mainly online. We also provided family support.

A PLACE TO WORSHIP – We offered live worship online every Sunday and supported others offline with readings and prayers.

The Mission looks to the future with optimism and positivity, greatly encouraged by achievements under are current strategic plan. The board wishes to both provide recognition and to thank the team of volunteers who work tirelessly to help and support the organisation's work. Without them it would be impossible for us to do what we do, and we are indebted to their generosity and kindness.

Church and Community Outreach

Sadly, the dominating issue facing the Community we serve is poverty. This crisis brings extra pressure e.g Mental health issue associated with living on the bread line. This year we were very grateful to the Joseph Rank Trust who granted a significant amount of money to be used solely to alleviate poverty in East Belfast. We were able to support of around 1,800 families through this unsolicited grant.

EBM joined with others in 2023 to represent East Belfast at local and national levels challenging the political decisions that keep people in poverty asking questions on the underlying issues that keep the most vulnerable more vulnerable. We joined alliances in East Belfast and the wider Northern Ireland faith and community sector to demand changes from our political leaders.

Our 5 objectives are:

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1. TO SUPPORT THOSE IN POVERTY- through the provision of a community fridge

The community fridge was established this year with a specific building, with a walk-in Freezer, in the construction phase. This will allow us to supply a wider range of food to a greater number of clients. Around 20-25 persons call in for food everyday

We are also grateful to the Atkinson fund who have granted us monies to assist those over 50 away from poverty.

The neighbours in need Christmas hamper programme delivered over 1,000 hampers.

We believe that, while hand-out support is needed, building community is of greater value. So, we have developed a number of opportunities for people to eat together, with a seniors lunch, community meals, woman's groups, Mother and toddlers groups.

2. TO PROMOTE CONNECTION AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT- whether that is people meeting in person or remotely

Friendship circle provides another opportunity for individuals to meet together, as does the daily drop-in

3. TO PROVIDE A YOUTH PROGRAMME - and continue to support families with young children

ASPIRE - This group, funded by BBC Children in Need and the Henry Smyth Foundation, is at its core a service that tackles educational underachievement in the local community. Around 60 children and young people from the age of 9-14 received assistance from staff and volunteers with their homework and engagement with fun projects that built their personal aspiration and coping mechanisms. Aspire offers much more than just homework support including, trips to international football games, art work.

4. TO PROVIDE A FREE CONSELLING SERVICE - to include a children's service

Care Counselling provides much need professional talking therapies. There are 7 volunteer counsellors offering an integrated model of counselling. 150 clients received 1,500 hours of professional help through the year. This remains an underfunded project that we need to find a funding model that makes it secure.

5. TO SECURE RESOURCES TO FUND THE ABOVE - and strengthen the link between the staff of community projects and the church leadership.

A good example of this collaborative approach to the work of EBM was a Christmas Tree Festival, which both raised funds and also encouraged the community.

Other areas worthy of comment.

PwC SUPPORT. We are very grateful for supportive relationship EBM has with PwC Belfast. They help with programmes such as living on a budget, support the meals on wheels programme, and support with volunteers in a few other projects.

CHURCH AND EXPLORING FAITH

The EBM congregation now comes from a wide and diverse backgrounds. Some, who have joined, have come having used other EBM services. We continue with Life Groups who share life together, in social and Spiritual gatherings. Contemplative Prayer continues Monday nights, via zoom.

EBM is part of the new Belfast East Circuit, consisting of 9 Methodist churches in East Belfast. This collective has allowed the EBM congregation to be part of circuit Bible studies, Sunday Evening Praise nights, a book club, and other encouraging gatherings.

EBM also connected with local congregations in 2023 to celebrate the major annual Christian events, for example joint services at Easter and Christmas.

We continued to use The Alpha Course to allow people from the community to explore Christianity and we are grateful to the TPF Thompson foundation for their support. A follow-up course has grown into a lively discipleship group who have continued to meet on a Thursday morning.

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Social Projects

EBM Employability

Overview:

In 2023, the EBM Employability team underwent significant transformations. Despite the cessation of the European Social Fund, the team secured new funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This enabled the consolidation of the Belfast Works and Community Family Support Program into a single initiative aimed at economically inactive individuals.

Transformative Change:

The year marked a period of transition for the employability team. The first quarter was challenging due to the conclusion of the European Social Fund, which had been instrumental in supporting the Belfast Works and Community Family Support Program. Despite advocacy from the Chief Executive, other executives of the Belfast Works project, and local political figures, there was minimal positive news at the beginning of 2023. Consequently, a redundancy process was initiated for all affected staff by March 23. Amid the uncertainty, several key staff members sought more stable employment opportunities, leaving the team without a manager, coordinator, or administrative support.

A New Start:

At the last moment, on March 31, 2023, at noon, EBM and the newly branded Belfast Works Connect consortium received confirmation of their successful bid for new funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Work commenced immediately on April 3 to rebuild the team and merge the two former projects into a single new initiative focusing solely on the economically inactive.

The Chief Executive Officer collaborated with the team to identify staff members with the necessary skills and experience for new key roles, including coordinator, connect navigators, skills navigators, and employment navigators. Initially, the project team consisted of 10 members, with funding available for 18 positions. The appointment of a team manager was completed in June 2023.

The latter half of the year focused on recruiting suitable staff and familiarising them with the new eligibility criteria for a project being developed from scratch by the lead partner, Upper Springfield Development Trust. This involved establishing new recording systems, recruitment channels, stronger community links, and strategies to reach the most isolated community members.

The employability team also faced personal challenges as two staff members lost their fathers to terminal illness during Christmas, and another key member was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. Despite these hardships, the team remained committed to supporting the most vulnerable in the community.

Early Success:

Throughout the year, the employability team supported 201 individuals, with 20 securing employment. The project necessitated new insights into the needs of the economically inactive, leading to the development of three variations of a client management system, culminating in the final version of Microsoft Dynamics CRM in December 2023.

Looking ahead to 2024, the team is now fully staffed and prepared to administer a project with 26 individual outputs and outcomes. They have adapted to the new challenges of working with a client base facing multiple, often multi-generational, barriers to employment.

The Executive team has proactively managed the narrative surrounding the difficulties of operating with short-term funding while maintaining staff and delivering high levels of support. A peer group has been established, and lobbying priorities have been set. The goal is to make early announcements to provide certainty for staff and facilitate planning.

Hosford

Hosford is the homelessness service of East Belfast Mission providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim of the project is to support people to break out of homelessness and to prevent people becoming homeless through support in their own homes.

Hosford hostel provides accommodation for 26 people (single men and women aged 18 years plus) and have a stepping stone approach of single rooms and apartments which helps people to rebuild their lives and work towards living independently. We offer 24/7 support and each resident has their own Support Worker who provides housing related support to help them to find and maintain their own home. Residents also have a chance to engage with all the other services Hosford and East Belfast Mission provide as well as help to link in with any relevant services in the area.

Hosford Tenancy Support workers provide practical and emotional support to people who are living independently but encountering problems and could lose their home. They aim to enable people to live independently through developing their skills and their ability to deal with problems. The service is about preventing homelessness by

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intervening in its causes.

Hosford's Health and Wellbeing Project aims to tackle the health and wellbeing issues faced by people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This project gives those involved opportunities to learn new skills, make progress in their lives, meet friends, and to be part of a community.

Hosford Community Homes (HCH) is social enterprise project providing homes in the community for people who are homeless. This is a unique and innovative project, contributing to tackling homelessness and delivering Community Wealth Building in East Belfast. HCH currently provides 13 homes in the community.

Achievements during 2023:

- Maintained our 26 unit homeless hostel with an occupancy of 99%-providing shelter and support to over 30 people and helping 90%+ of our residents to find accommodation and to have a better life. A program of maintenance work was completed, and furniture procurement and painting undertaken; maintaining an excellent quality of accommodation for our residents. A rent increase of 10% was secured from Housing Benefit. The service was audited by Supporting People who assessed the service to be of an excellent standard.
- Provided Tenancy Support for over 100 people who are at risk of homelessness. 95% of clients maintained their own home. Over 95% of clients achieved outcomes in terms of; health, addictions, education/employability, social inclusion, or financial situation.
- Successfully set up and delivered the new Housing Executive Tenancy Sustainment Fund project. The project has achieved its objectives of increasing partnership working with the Housing Executive and increasing the number of Housing Executive tenants who are supported to maintain their tenancies. The project will run for another year and we can then reapply for funding; feedback from the Housing Executive and from beneficiaries is very positive.
- Delivered our Health and Wellbeing projects; community garden, refugee women's group, health and wellbeing group, trips throughout the year. These projects reached 30+ people each week. We won the Aisling Award for Building Community for our work in this area.
- Following a successful pilot in 2022 we have now established Mental Health and Wellbeing worker to provide one-to-one mental health support to our clients. The role targets people who will not engage with mainstream services and has proven effective at engaging the target group with 10-20 people engaging with support each week.

Hosford Community Homes:

- 102 (6 bed HMO). Delivered 6 units of accommodation at 98% occupancy.
- Commonweal Housing: 5 houses were purchased and tenants moved in. The project is working well at every level; financial, tenant experience, operationally. The project is being evaluated by QUB and we hope to evidence a viable model for tackling housing exclusion. The project was formally launched at Stormont in Spring 2023.
- 240 Newtownards Road; Prince William visited 240 and EBM to launch the Royal Foundations Homewards project. Work commenced on the site in early 2024 and is due to be completed in December 2024.
- Financial Transaction Capital Loan; a business case was developed, discussions are ongoing, with potential to access the finance in the financial year 2024/25 should all parties be agreeable. FTC has the potential to facilitate the sustainable development of HCH.
- CFC provided a 5 bedroom house to EBM and Starling to deliver housing for destitute asylum seekers. 2 men moved into the house and we started the process of registering it as a HMO after which it will be able to provide accommodation for 5 people. £15,000 was donated by a private donor to carry out works re HMO conversion.
- Acquired Nationwide Funding to cover core costs of HCH.

Restore Charity Shops

East Belfast Mission operates eight retail shop units in Belfast, Antrim, Newtownards, and Larne under the brand name "Restore".

During 2023 Restore extended its supply chain for retail stock through renewing, maintaining and expanding existing partnerships with several Local Councils. These collaborations not only increase stock for Restore but contributed significantly to the reduction of material going to landfill through increasing the recycling of furniture and other reusable goods.

The shops continue to provide a significant financial return which is crucial to East Belfast Mission being able to meet a rising demand from families in the community needing assistance with food and energy costs.

Our Restore shops also continue to assist people who are unemployed or economically inactive to enter or return to employment. Restore facilitates this through offering job placements and volunteering positions in our retail outlets, providing a critical element in people's journey back to work.

The Restore underlying business model remains strong, with Restore performing above budget in 2023 in a

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continuingly difficult retail environment. Going forward Restore has a clear vision of its goals for 2024 and the team are focused on achieving them.

Café Refresh

In 2023 Café Refresh enjoyed a growth in business across our main three areas of service, our Community Café, Catering for events and meetings and our Meals on Wheels Service. Customers comments suggest this growth is occurring as word has spread about the quality and taste of our food – and the fact that we are offering great food at affordable prices.

We benefited significantly in this reporting period from the support of PwC volunteers, who have helped deliver our Meals on Wheels three days each week, helping us to manage costs and therefore keep prices affordable. We are very grateful for this support and feedback from PwC staff is that they find this volunteering very meaningful rewarding.

In 2023 we began plan to produce some of our most popular Café meals in a line of chilled prepared meals, which people can easily and enjoy at home. We hope this will prove to be a popular new service in the next reporting period.

Café Refresh maintained a 5/5 (scores on the doors from Belfast City Council) hygiene rating throughout 2023.

Turas

“Turas” meaning journey or pilgrimage in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic, is an Irish language project designed to connect people from all communities with the Irish language and works to promote understanding and acceptance of the shared languages and heritages of Ulster. Turas continues to allay fears around the language and to be a healing influence. Turas is the only Irish language project which exists within a PUL community. The work that has been carried out over the last 10 years has seen a softening of attitudes and a growth in the level of interest within unionist communities. A study carried out by Dr David Mitchell (Trinity College Dublin) on the Turas Project, found language classes help groups in conflict find shared heritage. ‘Language learning has the potential to build empathy between groups in conflict and help revise destructive understandings of history, according to researchers in Trinity College Dublin, who have conducted a study of the Turas’ Irish-language centre in East Belfast. Language-learning projects can help revise destructive understandings of history’ - Trinity News and Events (tcd.ie)

Classes

Turas offers both in-person and online Irish classes as well as some live streamed classes. This year we registered over 500 people for classes.

We provide a weekly outreach class in Cairnshill Methodist and Dundonald High School.

Turas supports 5 university students with bursaries that cover part of the annual course fee. Five people are undertaking degrees in Irish at both QUB and U.U.

Turas has a Grúpa Ceoil (singing group) as well as a new storytelling group.

New mentor groups have also been set up and they meet together regularly to support learners. There are over 60 mentees supported by more experienced learners in Turas. This scheme fosters fantastic comradery between the learners and greatly develops both language and teaching skills

Podcast – Podchraoladh Turas

Turas launched a podcast series to highlight the work of our learners staff and special guests. This is a bi-lingual podcast which aims both to offer an opportunity for learners to listen to Irish and for other people outside of Turas to hear about the work being carried out.

Talks/Presentations

Turas provides talks and presentations on placenames, Irish language history, etc to local groups both in east Belfast and further afield.

Summer Events

Turas organised a number of historical tours during the summer, for example a tour of South Armagh with Una Walsh.

Turas organised 2 end of term celebrations, one for Turas and one for the Naíscoil.

Library

The Turas Library (leabharlann) provides study space for individuals and groups, access to books and other resources, as well as support and advice. The staff of the library have organised various talks as well as music and cultural events for learners and visitors.

Schools

We teach weekly Irish classes to all pupils in Braniel Primary School and also provided a six-week course for P3 pupils in Glencraig Integrated Primary School as well as an after-school club in Loughview Integrated Primary School.

The Con O’Neill Storytelling project visited 6 schools.

Animation Project

We launched our new animation which celebrates a learner within Turas and tells the story of our journey so far.

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Merchandise

We sell in-house, online, at local markets and at our events and bus tours. We recently received funding to commission and produce new products which will be ready for the Christmas market.

Turas Tourism Project

We are working with PWC to increase the sales of bus tours. We organised a media tour for local media and influencers. We launched a new East Belfast Mural Tour which focuses on the positive and quirky stories connected with east Belfast.

Gaeltacht Visits

Cairde Turas financed a Gaeltacht weekend for Turas learners in Donegal and Turas took a group of learners to the Kerry Gaeltacht for a week's language immersion as well as a weekend of language and music in Cusendall.

Naiscoil na Seolta

Turas is the parent organisation of the new Integrated Irish-medium pre-school in east Belfast. Eighteen children are presently in attendance with twenty-five expressions of interest for the new term. The project has been awarded PEAG funding from the Education Authority and is now becoming a pre-school as well as a pre pre-school provider. Turas supports both staff and parents. Turas meets regularly with representatives from NICIE (Integrated education sector) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (Irish-medium education sector) to ensure the growth and development of Naiscoil na Seolta.

Cultural Events

Turas walked organised an evening of music and poetry for Halloween, Christmas and Burns' Night in Turas. Turas runs regular pop-up Gaeltacht events in the Boundary Tap Room on the Newtownards Road and ran a Pop-up Gaeltacht in the Second Fiddle in the Cathedral Quarter in March.

Fundraising

Fundraising performed well in 2023 while navigating the financial difficulties continuing to be caused by funding cuts, the cost of living crisis and increasing costs. Both the Fundraising Manager, Fundraising officer and Individual Giving Officer performed over and above their 3:1 income target resulting in increase in income for the department comparative to 2022. Notable successes include:

- Individual Giving- the Annual Summer & Christmas Mail Appeals raised in excess of £15,000 in total between the two appeals.
- Community Fundraising- The Fundraising Officer & Individual Giving Officer established a number of successful fundraising events during a difficult year for community income generation. These included the second successful Mourne's Challenge and the Christmas Tree Festival as well as numerous small events and activities which provided steady unrestricted income.
- Legacy Fundraising- the Fundraising Manager continued to engage with 'Will to Give' to pursue legacy fundraising opportunities. In the upcoming 2023 year a new legacy pack will be developed to be better utilised on our new website.
- Businesses- Connections with local businesses have been successfully pursued by the Fundraising Team notably including partnership with Gateley Legal and Hearth, Ballyhackamore.
- Capital projects- the fundraising team were successful in securing full funding for the Community Fridge capital project (as well as revenue costs) and the Fundraising Manager worked closely with the Hosford Team on an application to the Belfast City Council Neighbourhood Renewal Fund for another Hosford Community Homes Project.
- Strategic approach- The fundraising team successfully worked with projects to create and complete income generation plans for 2023. Going Forward the Fundraising and Sustainability Manager will continue to work with project managers to move onto 3 year income generation budgets
- Communications including Public Relations - the fundraising team, in particular the Individual Giving officer, continues to manage and provide operational communications support across EBM. In 2023 a new website was successfully launched for the organisation.
- Chartered Institute of Fundraising in Northern Ireland Awards 2023 - We received a highly commended award for "Fundraising Team of the Year" and the
- Fundraising Manager received highly commended in "Fundraiser to Watch under 30"

Financial review

Investing in modernising our internal function has limited the Mission's ability to grow its financial reserves in 2023 reporting year. However, the Board of Directors are confident that East Belfast Mission's financial model should generate surpluses in future reporting periods.

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Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Accounting Policies.

Reserves policy

Unrestricted Reserves

Unrestricted reserves ("free reserves") are those reserves which the East Belfast Mission can expend at the discretion of the directors to promote the objects of the charity. The directors do not believe that the company needs excessive amounts of unrestricted reserves.

East Belfast Mission is partially a budget financing organisation. At present expenditure and income are directly related – when the organisation contracts with a service provider to provide a service this contract is contingent on full funding, including a 12% contribution for Overhead Costs, for the service being secured.

However the company needs to maintain a level of unrestricted reserves in order to:

- Ensure that it continues to operate on a going concern basis and remains viable to be able to adapt its activities from time to time to cope with changing circumstances, which cannot always be reliably foreseen and anticipated;
- Protect against a decline or interruption of current sources of income – discretionary grants, for example may cease unexpectedly, or be reduced, and new sources of revenue have to be found; and
- Provide for working capital or regular fluctuations in income and expenditure. Given the nature of the company's multiple funding streams, incomings and outgoings do not always coincide exactly resulting in peaks and troughs which need to be provided for to ensure continuity of service provision.

Given the above the directors have established a policy which is reviewed annually, whereby the unrestricted funds held by the charity should be a target of at least three months of average expenditure.

Unrestricted Designated Reserves

Unrestricted designated reserves comprise unrestricted funds designated for a particular purpose by the directors. These are typically reserves relating to individual projects which remain designated to the individual programmes of activity.

Restricted Reserves

Restricted reserves are those reserves which either have specific conditions attached to them as to how they are spent. It is anticipated that this amount will be utilised during the coming year.

Risk Management

The board assesses the major risks to which the charity is exposed on an ongoing basis, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the company and is satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate our exposure to the major risks. The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee will ensure a regular review of risks takes place.

The principal risks facing East Belfast Mission relate to safeguarding of its clients which the company manages through the deployment of appropriately qualified and trained staff and of appropriate standards. The main uncertainty facing the organisation relates to the funding environment in which the company operates. At the time of writing this report the only material threat on the horizon is the end of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF). This was introduced by the UK Government to replace European Structural Funds, with two funding contracts being issued for the period April 2023 to March 2025. The Mission's Employability Service is fully funded by the UK SPF, as part of a five partner consortium providing an employability service across the city of Belfast. The Mission along with its consortium partners is actively engaging Elected Representatives and public officials in Belfast and London to secure replacement funding from 1st April 2025. Should this be unsuccessful, there will be a 'cliff edge' drop in employability services within the city's most socially deprived neighbourhoods. Seventeen job positions in the Mission would also face redundancy.

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Plans for future periods

During the next period EBM will continue into year 3 of its Strategic Plan to 'Share Love and Leadership in East Belfast'. Core to delivering this will be:

- Innovative developments in our programmes, such as the further development of Hosford Community Homes allowing us to continue to re-home people in the context of a chronic shortage of public housing
- Playing a leading role within the Community Sector in Northern Ireland to achieve replacement funding, or a continuation of funding, for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Launching and developing our Social Supermarket based in our Headquarters at the Skainos Centre, on Belfast's Newtownards Road
- Securing our Care Counselling Service through securing on-going funding
- Continuing to provide practical support, such as fundraising support, to smaller community organisations in East Belfast
- Providing 'thought leadership' through Public Affairs engagement

EBM will seek in the next reporting period to increase efficiency and mitigate risk via:

- Seeking to grow its financial reserves with a target of 'six months operating expenses
- A thorough review and documenting of its internal operating procedures.

Structure, governance and management

The East Belfast Mission ("EBM") was brought into existence by the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland under the Methodist Church in Ireland Act 1928. In 2008, the Mission was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee.

EBM is also governed by the Constitution (Manual of Laws) of the Methodist Church in Ireland as set out under the Methodist Church in Ireland Act 1928. The Mission has been granted charitable status by HMRC and accordingly is exempt from income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax. Its charity reference number is XN68566 and its company reference is NI069097. EBM has successfully completed the registration process with the Charity Commission in Northern Ireland and its Northern Ireland Charity Commission number is NIC100744.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

S Curragh

L J H Hopley

G M Mercer

D Jackson

Rev B B Anderson

B Maxwell

I C Colville

J M W Watson

D W Wylie

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Recruitment and appointment of trustees

In May 2014 the EBM board of directors approved a 'Corporate Governance Framework', which provides information on the arrangements, which have been established to ensure proper and effective management of EBM's affairs. The framework made provision for and developed the 'Terms of Reference' of the following committees:

1. Finance, Audit and Risk
2. Governance
3. Appointments and Remuneration

During the 2023 the Appointments and Remuneration Committee was given a wider Human Resource remit by the EBM Board and renamed the Human Resources Committee.

A structured induction process has been implemented for new board members and ongoing training has been provided to existing directors. All directors have received Governance training from the company solicitor and a Director Handbook and a Conflict of Interest Policy were implemented.

The board is nominated locally and approved annually by the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland and at 31 December 2023 comprised of 9 members.

None of the trustees has any beneficial interest in the company. All of the trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

Funds held as custodian trustee

No funds are held as custodian on behalf of others.

Statement of trustees responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of East Belfast Mission for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that Miscampbell & Co be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

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Disabled employees

The company gives full consideration to applications for employment from employees with disabilities where the candidate's particular aptitudes and abilities are consistent with adequately meeting the requirements of the job. Opportunities are available to employees with disabilities for training, career development and promotion. Where existing employees become disabled, it is the company's policy to provide continuing employment wherever practicable in the same or an alternative position and to provide appropriate training to achieve this aim.

Employee involvement

The company operates a framework for employee information and consultation which complies with the requirements of the Information and Consultation of Employee Regulations 2004. During the year, the policy of providing information about the company has been continued through the communications framework. The CEO, Head of Finance & Corporate Services and the Project Managers meet on a monthly basis. 'Buzz Briefings' are compulsory for all staff three times each year. At these Senior Management brief staff on the direction and performance of the Mission and invite staff to raise ideas and issues which they believe, if addressed, would improve the impact of the Mission or the welfare of staff and volunteers.

The trustees report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

S Curragh
Trustee



1 July 2024