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## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES

The trustees (who are also the directors of North Down Community Network for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual 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 charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. 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 2015 (FRS102);
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

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

In so far as, the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have to make themselves aware of any relevant accounts information and to establish that the independent examiner is aware of that information.

By order of the board



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Valerie Miskimmon  
Director

Date: 10/12/24

## **NORTH DOWN COMMUNITY NETWORK**

Company limited by guarantee: Company No: NI 050662, incorporated 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004  
Charity Commission registered: Number: NIC 102333  
HMRC registered Charity Number: XR 37170

Registered address: North Down Community Network Resource Centre, 5 Castle Park Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT20 4TF

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024**

The Trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, have pleasure in presenting their report and the examined financial statements of the charity for the year / period ended 31 March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (FRS 102) in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

#### **Trustees of the charity**

The directors of the charitable company are its trustees for the purposes of charity law. The trustees who have served during the year and since the year end are as follows:

Peter Gay	Resigned 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
Aaron McMahon	
Robin Masefield	Resigned 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
Valerie Miskimmon	Chairperson
David McClarin	Treasurer
Maggie Boyle	
Kirsty Richardson	Appointed 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2024

#### **Structure, governance and management**

North Down Community Network (NDCN) is a company limited by guarantee. It has 56 paying members which are organisations operating in the community and voluntary sector in or around the north of Down – and another 42 non-paying associates\*. The members elect a board of up to 12 directors each of whom is recommended by a member organisation, except for up to 3 independents who are selected because they bring particular skill or knowledge. Its day-to-day operations are controlled by the Manager who reports to the board.

\* As at 31 March 2024

#### **Objectives and activities**

NDCN exists because there are communities and individuals in Bangor and the wider north of Down who need assistance. It seeks to help people to help themselves and its vision is that communities in Bangor and the wider north of Down should be safe, peaceful, diverse, inclusive, flourishing and economically vibrant – thus making the area one in which people want to live.

In particular its charitable purposes include:

In particular its charitable purposes include:

- a. promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of voluntary and community organisations and projects in the north of Down by providing advice, information, education and training, administrative support and practical assistance;
- b. promoting or assisting in promoting capacity building programmes and projects for the benefit of the people who have need of such assistance as a result of their youth, age, disability or infirmity, or social and economic circumstances;
- c. relieving poverty by the promotion, facilitation and organisation of adequate, accessible and quality programmes of vocational and educational training;
- d. promoting or assisting in the promotion of cooperation and networking between voluntary and community organisations and others in the area; and
- e. identifying, and helping to address, the funding and policy needs of voluntary and community organisations in the area of benefit.

NDCN acts as a focal point for the community and for community and voluntary sector organisations in the north of Down. For them it delivers a range of regular and/or routine services, it reacts where it can when it is asked and proactively it tries to identify issues where it thinks it can make a difference for their benefit. Throughout 2021-2022 operations were significantly affected both by the restrictions placed on them by the Covid-19 pandemic and by the additional community needs that pandemic caused. Both these effects are reflected in the following activity summaries:

Routine activities. In 2023-24 NDCN's activities included:

- The operation of the accessible town centre drop-in space on Main Street Bangor, the NDCN Wellbeing Centre & Community Hub.
- A weekly programme of wellbeing activities Monday – Friday for people to access towards supporting their physical and mental health and wellbeing, funded by the Public Health Agency.
- The provision of community outreach support and capacity building from the Outreach Community Development Worker who is funded by the NI Housing Executive.
- Supporting the provision of support for young people in four areas of Bangor funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.
- A range of information and support services to strengthen the infrastructure of the Community and Voluntary sector across North Down.
- Collaborative activities with a range of partner organisations.
- Activities to support the health and wellbeing of people in need with signposting services, group work sessions, a mental health forum and access to IT, funded by the Dep of Health via CFNI.

Reactive responses. NDCN endeavours to respond to needs, such as those which create a crisis and/or require an urgent response, as and when they emerge in communities. During the year there continued to be a responsive approach to managing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the pressures and challenges this placed on the most vulnerable people in communities. We delivered services and support in communities on an outreach basis with partners and the work with young people via weekly youth clubs

and tailored programmes. These challenges were also compounded by the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the mental health of people, young and older.

Proactive initiatives. NDCN looks out for other opportunities to further its work and engage strategically for benefit of the people and groups it serves and support. For instance, we conduct needs assessment to help identify needs and plan the most appropriate response, we also continue to participate in a range of forums and partnerships and facilitate the North Down Community Practitioners Forum to support and co-ordinate volunteer lead community associations as they respond to needs in their communities. NDCN participate in the Charity Commission Forum to represent the needs of our member groups and partners. In addition, NDCN are members of the Bangor Connects group, which includes representatives from local groups, businesses, and organisations. We also continue to host the NDCN Community Matters podcast which aims to explore important issues and needs in an informal and accessible way; topics covered are in direct relation to need so have included the impact of cost of living, housing shortages, political apathy in NI and more.

### **Achievements, performance and public benefit statement**

In addressing its objectives and declare purposes during the year NDCN delivered the following benefits:

1. Sector support. Promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of voluntary and community sector in the north of Down:
  - 201 occurrences of one-to-one support with community groups and organisations.
  - 59 meetings to lobby for needs of community groups/areas.
  - Hosted 2 showcasing volunteer events.
  - Delivered 416 training, development or health sessions to participants.
  - Conducted 4 needs assessment surveys in areas of disadvantage.
  - 5856 people signposted to a range of information, services and support.
  - Supported groups with 48 applications for funding.
  - Signposted 46 people onto volunteering.
  - Issued 28 online magazines (e-zines) to 410+ contacts.
  - 1000 social media posts promoting the activities and services of community groups.
  - Created and distributed 20,000 'information and support summary' booklets which contained a wide range of information about member groups and many other sources of support and information.
  - Created 12 NDCN Community Matters podcast programmes created.
  - Supported 2 new groups with the charity registration process.
2. Capacity building. Promoting capacity building for the benefit of the people who need such assistance:
  - Delivered youth clubs for 10-15 year olds with 1800 attendees over the year, to meet their needs regarding safe, fun and welcoming spaces to build their capacity, resilience, life skills and aspirations. This also include a Children In Need programme to support career development and improve educational attainment of young people.

- Created 2 volunteer showcasing and recognition events with 156 people attending.
  - Facilitated the Asylum Seekers support group consisting of partners from the statutory sector, Mears Foundation, faith based and community and voluntary sector who were collectively seeking to respond to the asylum seekers who were put in Bangor by the Home Office after arriving in the UK.
3. Poverty relief. Relieving poverty by accessible schemes and programmes of vocational and educational training:
- Provided one-to-one and small peer group training on 8 occasions build capacity, skills and knowledge of local community group volunteers.
  - Made 189 foodbank referrals for people in poverty who required food.
  - Distributed 112 warm packs of clothing for people on benefits or from vulnerable groups.
  - Supported people in need and crisis with electric, gas, white-goods, and meal vouchers as part of a 'hardship co-operative' with 5 other community partners.
  - Signposted 302 people on to Advice services.
  - Secured resources to help people at risk of homelessness remain in their homes and maintain their tenancy.
  - Delivered Community Café in town centre for people in need.
4. Networking. Promoting cooperation and networking between voluntary and community organisations and others:
- NDCN are members of the Borough Community Planning Poverty Forum group, members of Bangor Connects (stakeholders in Bangor exploring regeneration of the town), and the Charity Commission NI Forum.
  - Hosted 7 Community Practitioner meetings consisting of 5 volunteer led Community Associations from areas of need.
  - NDCN attended 4 regional meetings with Network Organisations across Northern Ireland.
  - Hosted 2 Mental Health Forum meetings to share best practice and collate information to maximise the ability of member groups to signpost people on to support and services.
5. Organisational help. Helping to address the needs of voluntary and community organisations:
- Supported groups with 47 applications for funding.
  - Supported 13 groups with Charity Commission returns to ensure regulations were met.
  - Conducted examination of accounts for 18 groups and organisations.
  - Conducted 80 Access NI checks for groups and organisations.
  - On 325 occasions met with community groups and organisations for training, support and capacity development.
  - Supported community groups with applications to support their activities in responding to communities and residents and their needs emerging from the cost-of-living crisis,

ongoing impact of mental health issues and concerns about the uncertainty of NI political situation.

### **Financial review (including reserves policy)**

NDCN can do all this because it receives funding from the Department for Communities, the Public Health Agency, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The National Lottery Community Fund, Dept of Health via Community Foundation for NI, Children In Need, Ards and North Down Borough Council. It is thus dependent on these funders for its ability to operate. NDCN also has a small income via donations which are used to top-up and cover unfunded costs.

NDCN has established the minimum the level of free 'special' reserves that the charity ought to have. This is the level of unrestricted general funds which should normally be at least enough to cover the cost of closure (which would include the next three months of the estimated running costs for committed overheads plus that amount of money which would cover staff redundancies). After being reviewed last year, the 2023-24 this reserve amount was set at £26,000. This will be reviewed again in the coming year.

Going concern note. Due to the challenges of funding pressures within the Community and Voluntary Sector, NDCN has made a deficit in the year. However, the organisation has shown an improvement from the prior the year. They will be continuing these efforts to achieve and maintain financial sustainability.

### **Plans for future periods**

NDCN's future plans are to continue to deliver appropriate routine, reactive and/or proactive services and, in order to be able to do this, to continue to source support where it can but to work as efficiently as possible within the limits of the funding it manages to obtain.

### **Disclosure of information to the examiner**

We, the directors of the company who held office at the date of approval of these Financial Statements as set out above each confirm, so far as we are aware, that:

- there is no relevant accounting information of which the company's auditors are unaware; and
- we have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken as directors in order to make ourselves aware of any relevant accounting information and to establish that the company's examiner are aware of that information.

In approving the Trustees' Annual Report, we also approve the Strategic Report included therein, in our capacity as company directors.\*

On behalf of the board



Valerie Miskimmon MBE  
Chairperson