

Shopmobility Belfast Limited

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name Shopmobility Belfast Limited

Charity registration number 102592

Company registration number NI031517

Principal office and registered office Westgate House
2 Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6ED

The trustees

C Flinn
J Walsh (Chairperson)
C Toner
D Browne
S Stewart
P Bond

Company secretary Julie Guilar

Auditor Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

Bankers AIB
11-15 Donegall Square North
Belfast
BT1 5GB

Solicitors Culbert & Martin
7 Donegal Square West
Belfast
BT1 6JB

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Structure, governance and management

Governing Document

Shopmobility Belfast is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 1996. Shopmobility Belfast is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. Shopmobility Belfast is a membership organisation with currently 6340 members. There were 443 new members signed up in this period.

Appointment of trustees

The board of directors, who are the charity's trustees, and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. All directors give of their time freely and no director received remuneration in the year.

The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the directors benchmark against pay levels in other similar sized charities run on a voluntary basis. The remuneration bench-mark is the mid-point of the range paid for similar roles adjusted for a weighting of up to 30% for any additional responsibilities. If recruitment has proven difficult in the recent past a market addition is also paid with the pay maximum no greater than the highest benchmarked salary for a comparable role.

Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

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Organisation structure and how charity makes decisions

The board of trustees, which can have up to 15 members, administers the charity. The board normally meets quarterly and there may at any time be sub-committees covering development, membership, finance and audit which would normally meet monthly. A Chief Executive is appointed by the trustees to manage the day-to-day operations of the charity. To facilitate effective operations, the Chief Executive has delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and direct charitable activities.

Relationships with related parties

None of our trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity.

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Objectives and activities

The purposes of the charity are:

To provide people with limited mobility either through permanent or temporary disablement, illness, accident or age an assistance to shop and use the social, commercial, cultural and artistic facilities of Belfast and the surrounding area. We hope to provide an alternative to the state of isolation and withdrawal from normal life experienced by people who have found themselves temporarily trapped because of illness or age-related conditions.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

The strategies employed to achieve the charity's aims and objectives are to:

- provide all age groups with limited mobility the means to access basic services, retail and leisure facilities, by providing the necessary mobility equipment, free of charge, through its three central Belfast centres;
- provide motorised scooters, powered and manual wheelchairs and physical assistance on application of a simple membership process. After becoming a member of Shopmobility our members were able to use any of our facilities through the city and beyond e.g., from Queen Street to Crawfordsburn Country Park;
- train our staff to show our new members how to use the equipment on offer and when they were confident in its use encouraged our new and old members on the facilities to visit Belfast;
- train and provide mobility equipment at two hospitals in Belfast to allow patients to attend clinics and visitors with mobility difficulties to get to wards. Members can use the one membership card at any Shopmobility Belfast facility from thereon in;
- also train staff and volunteers to perform as advice centres to members and the general public in matters regarding disability, mobility and accessibility issues.
- work with the Alzheimer's Society to promote and help those with dementia to avail of our service to reduce isolation and depression associated with memory loss. All our staff and volunteers have completed a workshop and are trained Dementia Friends.
- to provide long term hire of scooters and wheelchairs. The equipment is often used for going on holiday, to help tourists access Belfast and surrounding areas and or for patients getting out of hospital, awaiting their own scooter or wheelchair delivery.

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Achievements and performance

In 2023/24 we helped 127,749 individuals, many of whom used the service numerous times.

Bookings were 12,409 in 2023/2024, an increase from 11,656 in the previous year.

We, like many organisations, continue to try to move forward from the Covid pandemic;

GP appointments remained severely impacted - visits in person continued to be reduced and held on the phone or online; Our demographic of older and vulnerable people was still unsure about venturing out much so curtailed trips out to essentials only; Bookings and membership numbers were also impacted through lack of tourism, which contributes a lot to our long-term hire figures;

The cost-of-living crisis has made a huge impact on people coming out to the city centre and shopping centres - whereas in the past they may have gone shopping two or three times a week they were reducing that to maybe once; Not only was the cost of items increased but so was fuel, parking fees and public and private transport price increased; Shops, restaurants, cafes etc. have all been decimated in recent years - people have less to come out for if they can't use their favourite shop or go into their favourite coffee shop; On-line shopping has become the norm and many people chose this method of buying rather than going out to shop - that includes clothing, groceries and toiletries. Inclement and bad weather conditions do have an effect on our business as people don't want to come out to sit on a scooter in pouring rain. Local shows and events like Summer Rose Fair, Titanic Maritime Festival, Twilight Markets and The Big Event continued to be impacted, mainly by costs. If budgets were reduced, the organisers in general cut the mobility services for the event in order to save money. This has a detrimental effect on new memberships and bookings;

Good news is that we successfully achieved funding from the Rank Foundation for a new Fundraiser/Marketing Executive;

This position is fully funded, alongside a mentor, for three years. The post holder has achieved £20,000 funding to date, helping Shopmobility Belfast to become more sustainable in the coming years by expanding its repair service;

Near the end of this financial period, we relocated from Connswater Shopping Centre to Bloomfield Avenue in Belfast and from Gresham Street to Rosemary Street in Belfast city centre. These new units are slowly finding a customer base and we intend to market these more intensely.

We continue to use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as our main social media platforms and receive enquiries and bookings through our website. Again the new Marketing role will help raise our profile on both social and traditional media and raise awareness of our service by building our brand; Julie, our CEO has continued to participate in sessions and presentations for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Disability Steering Group, Every Customer Counts, Belfast Chamber, Belfast City Council, Visit Belfast and Belfast City Airport Accessibility Forum. We continue to fulfil contracts with ten countryside parks, the Titanic Experience, Game of Thrones Tour, Newcastle leisure centre, George Best City Airport and both the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts.

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Financial review

Audited accounts at the end of 23-24 show a deficit of £69,347

Grant funding by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has continued and there has been no further renewal of contract with Belfast City Council (BCC). The Trustees confirm the grant provided by the Department of Infrastructure through the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD) has been used solely for the purposes for which it was provided. We continue to receive funding from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. (SEHSCT).

The trustees, having regard to the liquidity requirements of the charity, have kept available funds in an interest-bearing deposit account and seek to achieve a rate on deposit which matches or exceeds inflation measured by the retail prices index.

Reserves policy and going concern

Reserves are needed to bridge the timing gap between spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned temporary shortfalls in income should they arise. Holding adequate reserves safeguards the provision of our services in the event of unexpected significant financial pressures. The trustees consider that the ideal level of reserves would be between three to six months expenditure which for the year ended 31 March 2024 would be between £86,811 and £173,622.

Unrestricted reserves freely available to spend, therefore excluding fixed assets, restricted reserves and designated reserves amounted to £24,404. The trustees believe this represents a sufficient level of reserve to ensure that the going concern assumption is appropriate.

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Plans for future periods

Shopmobility Belfast will continue to provide its core services with a free daily hire service of mobility equipment to our users both within the Belfast City Centre area and in outlying shopping centres and parks. We will also continue to provide a long-term hire service for those who require it including people going on holiday and tourists staying in local hotels;

We will endeavour to forge new and continue old relationships with local groups and organisations and carry out demonstrations and information events at community centres, open days and various events to promote our service;

We will actively seek out new contracts and opportunities to work with stakeholders and statutory agencies to increase income and sustainability;

There will be a continued emphasis on marketing the services at the Royal and Ulster Hospitals;

We will continue to promote our service at shows and events across Northern Ireland providing equality and accessibility for all;

We also continue to participate in and support the Age Friendly Belfast projects and events. We have an on-going relationship with the Alzheimer's Society and engage with them through training sessions for our staff and volunteers;

We have achieved funding to allow us to expand and add value to our service with the addition of a repair and delivery service and we are building relationships with battery companies and parts suppliers to ensure costs are kept as low as possible;

We also hope to engage with hotels, the cruise ships and local airports to aid travellers and tourists to access Belfast in a more inclusive way;

Our aim for the next few years would be to establish a hub giving disability advice, support and signposting as well as our current services;

All these activities will be carried out with recourse to Government guidelines and primarily with regard to the health and safety of our members and staff.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes 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 charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

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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 applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- 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 responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and 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.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 27 June 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



J Walsh (Chairperson)
Trustee