

C.H.A.R.T.E.R. FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Communities Having a Response Towards Economic Regeneration

(A company limited by guarantee)

Trustees' report (including Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, have pleasure in presenting their Trustees' Report and the audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of 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 (Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102)), in preparing the trustees' report and financial statements of the charitable company which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for company and charity law purposes. The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) shows the gross income from all sources.

Chairperson's report

According to The Secretary of State and the 2023/24 budget for Northern Ireland, our government departments will receive £14.2bn for resources and £2.2bn capital. This compares to £14.3bn for resources and £2.1bn capital in 2022/23. As a result of this, the total amount allocated to Departmental budgets will reduce by 0.4%. It is reported that the reduction in the resource budget will put huge pressure on individuals, organisations and our communities. However, this does not fully reflect the extent of the pressures facing individual departments due to inflation, rising costs, increasing demands and pay pressures. In order to live within the funding available difficult decisions will have to be taken by the Northern Ireland Assembly and of course the communities we work with, who are already struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

With that said, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the Staff and Management for their determination, dedication and commitment to our organization. As a voluntary board we are aware of the current difficulties around the community voluntary sector with regards to long term sustainability of projects as it is year on year. With that said, I would like to thank our funders who constantly support our staff and the development of our organisation by providing us with the financial support for community programmes, and in turn allow us to support our community groups and local residents.

The Board, Management Team, staff and I would also like to thank the volunteers within our whole organisation who keep their communities in high spirit during difficult times, in particular the Diamond Project volunteers who continue to develop their capital build project, the community gym in Kingswood Street, which now has a number health programmes running daily from it. We are delighted that the Gym is now self-sufficient and is a great success. This is only due to the commitment by the volunteers who continue to deliver support, and the funding organisations which see this project as a viable social enterprise and keep supporting it year on year with running costs.

Charter NI staff are in the forefront of delivering support in Inner East Belfast and Outer East Belfast, ensuring that those living in high areas of deprivation are the forefront of our programmes and activities. This year has seen issues arise within communities regarding the cost-of-living crisis and our Staff worked closely with Belfast City Council and East Belfast Community Development Agency in a collective approach to issue Gas and Electric top-ups to those families who came forward for support. I would like to commend the staff who took part in this initiative, for the many hours that they put in to ensure that the communities they work in daily were fully supported.

The Board continues to recognise there is a need to develop greater community leadership and a need for capacity-building to happen at a grass roots level. We are delighted that our staff have now taken up extra training and education programmes to enhance their own knowledge and skills. This has resulted in two staff joining the Community Development degree course in Ulster University. Staff development is very important for our organisation moving forward in the future and is something that, as chairman of Charter NI, I totally support.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone that makes a difference at Charter NI each day, and look forward to next year, when it is hoped that new opportunities will arise from the SEUPB Peace Plus programmes. Until then we will continue to support the Management Committee, staff and the volunteers that support their communities daily.

Albert Hewitt
C.H.A.R.T.E.R. for Northern Ireland
Chairperson

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Trustees' report (including Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 March 2023

Objectives and Activities

Purposes and Objectives

C.H.A.R.T.E.R. for Northern Ireland (hereinafter Charter NI) Mission Statement is: *To enable, equip and empower communities to benefit from social and economic regeneration.*

Our Mission Statement recognises that when local community representatives and groups want to develop their communities they need to be enabled to do so by building their own capacity. Our choice of words reflects a commitment to helping people through providing support that allows them to articulate their own needs and shape their future at local, regional and international level. The support which Charter NI has provided and continues to provide is supported by local people with a thirst to improve themselves and their communities in which they live.

It is this with this support that we have the confidence in the strategic direction of Charter NI and which sets us apart from other initiatives. Our support mechanisms consist of not just financial support, but support that is driven by a community development ethos of supporting local people to build their capacity to regenerate their own areas, through education & training initiatives.

The people in our communities are people of ability and aspiration, who need a blend of support to enable them to lift themselves from low-level Noble categories into thriving, economically active, healthy and developing communities which work at a local level with statutory agencies.

Charter NI's vision as laid out in our Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is to play a leading part in the community regeneration of East Belfast & North Down, to see it develop into a safe, settled, prosperous place, that is stable and resilient, at ease with itself and its neighbours, culturally confident, tolerant and welcoming to others. The vision will be delivered in the following six strategic areas:

- Community and Cultural Confidence;
- Arts;
- Regeneration and Relationships;
- Training;
- Education, Employment and Engagement; and
- Resources and Restructuring.

The programmes that Charter NI's operational staff deliver, and will tender for in the future, all fit into one or more of these six strategic aims.

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Achievements and Performance

1. Tullycarnet Community Regeneration Project

Start date: 1st April 2016

End date: 31st March 2025

Funded by: Department for Communities

Partnership: Charter NI – Lead

Aims:

- To work with 13-25-year-olds in Tullycarnet area.
- Provide access to programmes on suicide awareness, drug / alcohol awareness and health.
- Signpost to Charter NI Training programmes and provide access to volunteering.
- Support community groups in the area.
- Establish information sharing in the community via a quarterly newsletter and social media.
- Maintain relationships with local schools and other service providers.

Objectives and Targets:

Building a confident community and encouraging local groups and individuals to participate in capacity building activities.

Encouraging and facilitating young people to participate in community relations projects.

- During this period over 40 young people participated in community relations projects.
- Over 1000 people participated in community bonding projects.
- During this period an average of 43 young people a week engaged in youth focused activities.

Improving connections between Tullycarnet, wider East Belfast and beyond.

Providing opportunities for Tullycarnet to develop links and partnerships with other communities

- Many people volunteered for community development activities.

Building a confident community.

Supporting and encouraging young people and local groups to participate in community development activities and capacity building programmes.

Sharing information about opportunities and events through the community website and social media.

Contributing towards a wide range of community services and initiatives for and with children, adults and senior citizens.

Improving educational outcomes for children and young people in the Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

- During the year we provided strategic direction, financial management and governance support to 9 community/voluntary sector groups.
- In partnership with Dundonald High School we set up a GCSE support group with external trainers providing tailored support programmes for 40 young people from the Greater Tullycarnet Area.

Supporting access to educational and development opportunities for all sections of the local community.

- 87 young people benefitted directly from the project, through participation within the Charter Youth Group/TP youth project and other initiatives.

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1. Tullycarnet Community Regeneration Project - continued

- Many young people have benefitted through participation in programmes run by the Tullycarnet Football Team, Tullycarnet Boxing Club and The Tullycarnet Dancers.

Charter NI continues to collaborate with the Education Authority Youth Service and other youth providers on the provision of outreach youth services and other programmes.

We are particularly looking forward to 2024 as new youth workers have commenced work in the area. We have already started planning for new support programmes.

2. Individual Carer Advice Network (ICAN) Programme

Start date: 1st November 2021

End date: 31st March 2023

Contracted with: Active Communities Network (ACN)

Partnership: Active Communities Network in partnership with Charter NI delivering

Funded by: Levelling Up Fund UK

ACN and Charter NI will provide employability training, personal development, basic skills, mentoring, volunteering and initiatives in identified areas of high deprivation and unemployment. Target is 60 Participants who are classed as at Risk and 20 16-24 year olds who are classed as needing support in Employment opportunities and mentoring.

The objectives are:

- To reduce economic inactivity among marginalised young people.
- To reduce barriers to opportunities in employment due to lack of training.
- To support young people in a range of activities, such as skill development, training and networking to access employment.

The aims are to combat inactivity, address barriers to young people, improve employability skills and tackle multiple disadvantages within specific personal barriers and social problems such as: caring responsibilities, offended/at risk of offending, being involved or at risk of being involved in anti-social behaviour, leaving/having left care, homelessness, with a disability or involvement with drug/alcohol abuse.

The project will provide an Employer Placement Scheme whereby ACN and Charter NI will link in with employers of various sizes to ensure the training initiatives fit with current job trends.

An element of youth services programmes has been delivered to 60 young people age 14-24 years old in East Belfast, to develop their confidence and self esteem. This was over a 3 month period, 4 times per week. Young people were engaged in fun activities that increased their learning in community and promoted volunteering opportunities.

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3. Diamond Project

Start date: 1st April 2016

End date: 31st March 2024

Funded by: Belfast City Council

Partnership: Charter NI Lead

Outputs:

Resident forum (18 residents)

- A large number of residents from the local area informed about projects, events and also training, employment and volunteering opportunities. This will boost community confidence and build self-esteem of local residents to engage in community development opportunities in their immediate area. Also, the forum will be attending various meetings and training opportunities across east Belfast and city wide. 100+ meetings in total.

Community news and information

- A community news sheet will provide information to the community on a quarterly basis. Information provided will be relevant phone numbers, community events and training opportunities. Five information leaflets to be given out to every household in the Diamond area (500+homes).

Inter-agency resident led meetings (4 meetings per annum)

- Four interagency meetings with relevant stakeholders on a quarterly basis. These meetings will involve housing providers, police, youth and community workers, local churches and information groups. The meetings will be based on information sharing and better joined up approaches to tackling specific issues in the local area. Four well attended inter agency meetings addressing specific issues in the local area.

Cross-community women's and younger people's group (20 women / weekly sessions)

- The residents meet with Short Strand women's group every Tuesday night. During these sessions they have completed a number of training workshops around women's rights, capacity building, community development processes and Good Relations projects, including arts & crafts.

Summer community festival & bonfire beacon

- 200 people attending community family fun day.

Halloween festival

Remembrance event

- 4-day long reflection and remembrance event for 150 people.

Christmas children's party

- Santa's grotto event for 150 young people and their families.

Pensioners' Christmas Lunch

- 45 pensioners receiving a Christmas lunch and a visit from Santa.

The Community Regeneration Officer (CRO) has also been on the ground constantly and gained approximately £7,000 of cost-of-living support in partnership with EBCDA and BCC. This provided gas and electricity and door to door support for the vulnerable and those who were highly deprived. The CRO is still part of the East Belfast Coronavirus Community Support Group.

Trustees' report (including Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 March 2023

3. Diamond Project - continued

Objectives:

- Engage every street in the Diamond project area.
- Identify issues on a street by street basis.
- Recruit new volunteers.
- Create a safe space for local residents to discuss and address their issues and solve local problems.
- Provide programmes and activities for local people to help improve their health and well-being.
- Encourage young people to get involved in the local community and attend programmes and activities in the community hub.
- Develop opportunities for local residents to engage with and be part of the local community.

4. Urban Villages - Diamond Health Hub

Start date: 1st April 2019

End date: 31st March 2024

Funded by: TEO Urban Villages

Partnership: Charter NI – Lead

Aims:

- Improve relationships between and within communities
- Increase sense of community belong.
- Increase use of shared spaces.
- Provide confident and enterprising community.

Project Outcomes:

- Health & well-being programmes delivered to improve well-being.
- Improved relationships with statutory partners through regular meetings.
- Improved sense of well-being for residents.
- Improved access to services and advice through local surgeries.
- Better support for ethnic minorities and integration within the local community
- Increased opportunities through volunteering opportunities.
- To develop a fully-functioning community hub that can be used by local residents, partners and the wider community to improve health and well-being and address issues at a local level.
- Groups involved in weekly activity at Diamond Health Hub: 353 sessions.
- 72 Participants involved in Health activities on a weekly basis.
- Develop participation and increase relationships with other Urban Village Areas.

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5. Pathways Programme

Start date: 1st April 2016

End date: 31st March 2024

Contracted with: Public Health Agency

Partnership: Charter NI Lead; Partners: Alternatives Restorative Justice & East Belfast Mission

Aim:

Charter NI was to provide and signpost services in a community setting where the client group feel at ease and confidentiality is secured. Charter NI operates in an environment created and managed by ex-prisoners and family members, so increasing the empathy with the client group, which in turn reduces the stigmatisation and sense of isolation. Through this approach Charter NI aims to improve information for the client and service provider and begin to collectively address the needs of this client group. Charter NI aims to assist through partnership working with the other groups and organisations involved in this project to help ex-prisoners and their families be independent and to live a better quality of life, improve health and emotional well-being for ex-prisoners and their families through counselling and alternative therapies.

Objectives:

- Provide counselling service to ex-prisoners and their families.
- Provide a range of alternative therapies to ex-prisoners and their families.
- Raise awareness and inform potential clients about the service.

Target Groups:

- Men;
- Women;
- Young People;
- Ex-prisoners;
- Senior citizens; and
- Unemployed

Charter NI are a key provider of services to ex-prisoners and they have formed a partnership along with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, East Belfast Alternatives and East Belfast Mission.

The programme provided professional confidential community-based counselling sessions with a wraparound complimentary service which comprises alternative therapies helping clients to enjoy better health and a more vital life, encouraging the client to feel comfortable and the motivation to utilise counselling services. The project acted as a referral to the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust. The service will be delivered in a community setting therefore increasing accessibility to those ex-prisoners and their families who may feel stigmatised or have perceptions around accessing mainstream services or those provided by larger organisations. The programme was closely monitored to get a better understanding of the key issues for the client group, the service providers and the extent of the problem.

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5. Pathways Programme continued

Outputs:

- Number of people counselled 52.
- Number of counselling sessions 421.
- Number of people having alternative therapies 15.
- Number of therapies 20.
- 4 information sessions given.

Counselling services were provided via Zoom, we also delivered packs to those who were isolated during this time to help with their mental health including mindfulness, breathing techniques and signposting to other COVID support programmes in the area.

6. Community Safety Programme, Tullycarnet

Start date: 1st August 2022

End date: 31st March 2023

Funded by: NIHE

Community Safety awareness programme for young people and NIHE residents from Tullycarnet Area, working on the following objectives:

- Building Community Confidence;
- Ensuring local solutions;
- Tackling anti-social behaviours;
- Tackling Crime;
- Tackling fear of Crime; and
- Working together for a safer community.

This programme is also supported by the Belfast City Council Anti-Social Behaviour team and the Community PSNI officers.

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6. Community Safety Programme, Tullycarnet - continued

The following support was provided:

- Safer Bonfires;
- Cost of living support for older people, provided by the younger people and therefore building community confidence through an intergenerational approach;
- Developed support for Mens Mental Health on a weekly basis;
- Drug and Alcohol training and support;
- Anti social behaviour around peoples properties;
- Community Safety event in December 2022;
- Help with Department for Infrastructure support around Street Lighting in October 2022; and
- Meeting each quarter with the statutory agencies in the area for potential redevelopment and other issues that may arise.

7. Summer Diversionary Programme/Cultural Fest

Start date: July 2022

End date: September 2022

Funded by: Belfast City Council

Our programme of activity included festivals for Inner and Outer East Belfast areas which aimed to enhance and compliment the cultural celebrations in the lead up to the Twelfth of July by positively promoting heritage, educating on broader cultural contexts, and showcasing locals' artistry in the development of new creative work. These events aimed to link Outer East Belfast into Inner East Belfast using diversionary activities focusing on Bands, Bonfires, Historical Talks, Safer Community partnerships and Community Celebrations that engaged with approximately 1,500 people.

Other activities included workshops focusing on creativity, bands & policing. The programme that we delivered was aiming to guide and mentor young people to choose a more positive way to express their culture, taking on board their views on their culture attitudes, stereotyping and awareness of what positive culture and other cultures are. Events to compliment this also included site visits to those traditional bonfires across Belfast that are kept tidy and those that use beacons instead.

8. Training for Women Network (TWN) Pass Programme

Start date: January 2023

End date: March 2023

Contracted with: TWN

Partnership: TWN, in partnership with Charter NI as delivery

Funded by: European Social Fund

TWN and Charter NI will provide employability training, personal development, basic digital skills, mentoring, volunteering and initiatives in identified areas of high deprivation and un-employment. Target is 17 Participants who are classed as "NEETs", Not in Education, Employment or Training.

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8. Training for Women Network (TWN) Pass Programme - continued

The objectives are:

- To reduce economic inactivity among marginalized young women;
- To reduce long-term unemployment among disadvantaged young women; and
- To support young women in a range of activities, such as skill development, training and networking to access employment.

The aims are to combat inactivity, address barriers to young women's participation, improve employability skills and tackle multiple disadvantages within the specific personal barriers and social problems such as: caring responsibilities, offended/at risk of offending, being involved or at risk of being involved in anti-social behaviour, leaving/having left care, homelessness, with a disability or involvement with drug/alcohol abuse.

The Project will add value in some of the most disadvantaged and isolated areas by offering the provision of a College Liaison Officer to work at a local level with young female NEET's in community-based education centres to promote the step into Further Education across NI.

The project will provide an Employer Placement Scheme whereby TWN and Charter NI will link in with employers of various sizes to ensure the training initiatives fit with current job trends. The project will also include the use of 3 incentives to aid participant retention and widen horizons.

9. Tampon Tax - Connecting Women in the Community Programme

Start date: Jan 2023

End date: March 2023

Delivery and support of Women in the Community to build capacity and partnership working for the future. Target was 15 women to be included.

Outputs:

- Total numbers Recruited: 17
- Total numbers completing online registration form: 17
- Total numbers completing online post-project survey: 17

The ladies on this programme took part in different sessions of delivery that helped with their self esteem and personal development before going on a one night residential to continue on with their non accredited programme.

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9. Tampon Tax Connecting Women in the Community Programme - continued

Activities included:

- Mindfulness
- Life Action Plan
- Goal Setting
- Thoughts - Feelings - Actions
- Facing Fears
- Calming Strategies
- Leadership Skills
- Capacity Building
- Volunteering in your local area

Alongside this the ladies attended the local Boxing Club for 12 weeks and also were attending the local gym to help with their confidence, body and fitness awareness and healthy eating programme.

Our activities increased positive self image of the ladies by supporting them with confidence and body image also.

Increased the overall well being by giving them strategies to work on at home to do with their mental health ie mindfulness, goal setting and facing their fears.

Increased their Leadership skills by working on volunteering or developing their volunteering skills in the local ladies group in the Tullycarnet Area, we focused on what is needed for a great leader and how different personalities can support a group to succeed.

The women developed their personal skills as well as skills they can now take forward in their volunteering roles in the community. They developed a new constitution for their group, and also felt empowered enough to take feedback from others and make changes, which included changing their name. They engaged in softer skills that will help their community as well as their families at home too. They left the programme with a lot of strategies in place to help them should tough times arise and if anxiety and stress raises its head in either work, education or in their communities. The Ladies also set goals for the next 6 months to help them strive towards achievement in all areas of life.

10. TNL Community Fund Awards for All – Future-proofing

Charter NI programme to develop a new 3 year Strategic plan and increase training opportunities with the staff and board.

This programme was facilitated by an outside agency to ensure that all thoughts, perspectives and new aims were valued and included.

- 5 Community Groups were included in feedback by voluntary organisations that Charter NI work with on a weekly basis.
- 2 Board Meetings with outside agency
- 1 Full planning day with Board and staff in attendance to focus on future objectives.
- 2 Staff meetings with outside agency to ensure that staff felt confident to talk about future plans for the organisation.
- 1 Three year strategic plan in place for April 2023.

This project has now been completed

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11. Arts Council NI/TNL Good Causes – Platinum Jubilee

The programme was awarded for Arts and Crafts projects to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in East Belfast. The children involved, and their families, made scrapbooks and participated in print making, etching and monoprints, ceramics, crown-making and photography. The art work was then displayed at an art gallery in Belfast, PS2. This tied in with the Queens' Jubilee celebrations and over 200 children and adults attended. The workshops were attended by 49 children and 10 volunteers.

All aims and objectives were fully met.

12. Core Funding Support

Start date: 1st April 2022

End date: 30th November 2022

Funded by: Halifax Foundation for NI

To develop future opportunities within the organisation and promote staff development in the finance and administration department.

13. Small Grants

There are many small funders within Charter NI projects which compliment the bigger projects stated above. One of these successful smaller project is:

Lisburn Castlereagh City Council - Good Relations and Cultural Identity - cultural programmes, workshops, and community arts projects with Longstone Residents Association in the Ballybeen area.

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Staff development

The charitable company's most important resource is its people, their knowledge and experience are crucial in meeting our charitable objectives. Retention of key staff is critical and we have invested increasingly in employment training and development.

Our Volunteers

It is vital that volunteering is recognised as a fundamental part of any community development framework and as a strategically important element of it. There is an inextricable link between volunteering as a multifaceted activity and community development as a process. Volunteering happens in many different forms and can be carried out on a continuum of informality to formality. Both are equally valuable and contribute in a myriad of ways to building communities where people can feel happy, safe and fulfilled. We in Charter NI will continue to facilitate this process with the grassroots communities that we work with.

Environmental and health and safety

The charitable company recognises its responsibility to carry out its charitable operations whilst minimising environmental impacts. The trustees' continued aim is to comply with all applicable environmental legislation, prevent pollution and reduce waste wherever possible.

The company is committed to achieving the highest practicable standards in health and safety management and strives to make its office and all sites safe environments for employees and visitors alike.

Financial Review

The financial statements deal with all the income and expenditure of the charitable company, as well as its financial position at the year end. The results for the year and the financial position were considered satisfactory by the trustees.

The company returned net incoming resources for the year of £16,920 (2022: net outgoing resources of £28,554) split restricted deficit £25,239/ unrestricted surplus £42,159, which reflected the completion of a number of projects during the year.

All monies received supported key objectives of the charitable company, funding charitable activity costs and support costs, as well as capital expenditure.

At 31 March 2023, total funds were £293,399 (2022: £276,479), an increase of £16,920 from the previous year, with an increase of £42,159 in unrestricted funds.

Unrestricted funds at 31 March 2023 were £96,539 (2022: £54,380), of which £42,055 were designated for specific uses (2022: £16,415) and £6,105 (2022: £5,925) would only be realisable through the disposal of fixed assets.

The organisation continues to work tirelessly to secure income from various sources to finance its ongoing activities with its key stakeholders. The main source of funding are grants received from various bodies as disclosed in note 3 in the financial statements.

Risk management

The charity's operations expose it to a variety of financial risks that include the effects of changes in liquidity risk and restricted funding cash flow risk. The charitable company has in place a risk management programme that seeks to reduce the adverse effects on the financial performance of the company by monitoring levels of cash and maintaining no debt.

Given the size of the charity, the trustees have delegated the responsibility of monitoring financial risk management to the management group with details of all accounts verified at board meetings. The policies set by the board of directors are implemented by the charity's senior management team.

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Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity 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

The charity's policy is to build and retain a level of reserves which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The trustees are striving to secure reserves in the future sufficient to meet statutory obligations, committed expenditure, core salaries and running costs for a period equivalent to 6 months annual expenditure. The trustees believe that the period of 6 months is necessary in order that there is continuity of service, and will work towards the implementation of this policy.

The company has developed a plan to establish and maintain this agreed level of reserves. The company will continue to monitor compliance with this policy on a regular basis and the Board will review the appropriateness of the policy annually.

Free reserves are those unrestricted reserves not designated for, nor invested in fixed assets, which are available for general use and which can be designated for future developments. At 31 March 2023 their level was £48,379 (2022: £32,040), which would cover 5-6 months core salaries and running costs, whilst the redundancy pay reserve plus 6 months core salaries and running costs would approximately equate to £70,000.

Public benefit

The trustees believe that the organisation provides a public benefit in a number of ways and most obviously through its efforts to promote community development and the advancement of reconciliation as well as conflict resolution. This is achieved by undertaking a range of projects to support reconciliation and promote community cohesion.

The trustees are fully aware of the guidelines from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to comply with the Charities Act, and believe they are operating entirely within those guidelines.

Plans for the future

Charter NI's origins and focus to date reflects the challenges facing the communities it represents. Many of these challenges are clearly evident and well documented and reflect deep seated structural problems including high levels of multiple deprivation, low levels of educational achievement, community divisions and safety issues, limited community confidence and engagement, drug and alcohol abuse, with a poor physical infrastructure and environment.

Combined, these issues have led the communities and the areas to be described or categorised as hard to reach and disconnected. Against this backdrop the political situation remains uncertain, with the only certainty being less money for public services and reduced budgets for those engaged in front line community services and greater competition for funding. While not underestimating the challenges, the local communities have much to offer in terms of community pride, a history of voluntary activity and self-help through church and voluntary groups, a rich cultural and industrial tradition and of local business development.

Charter NI's work has reflected the reality of the situation on the ground, while being aware of the potential within the local communities and pro-actively seeking out new opportunities. These will include seeking funding for core staff and sustainable programmes that can build the capacity of local volunteers and groups. Charter NI will continue to seek opportunities that will support the aims of our organization. It is vital that we continue to provide opportunities to enhance the capacity of the communities we serve.

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Reference and Administrative Details

Registered and Principal Office

First Floor
275a Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 1AF

Company Registration number

NI054626 (Northern Ireland)

HMRC Charity Registration number

NI00816

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland Registration number

NIC105834

Directors/Trustees and Senior Management

The trustees who served the charity during the year and up to the date of approval were as follows:

Brendan Mackin
Jim Birch
Rev William Shaw
Denis Rowan
Craig Brown
Albert Hewitt (Chairperson)
Leanne Todd (resigned 23 March 2022)
Peter Bunting

Company secretary

Craig Brown

Senior Management Personnel

Operations Manager – Caroline Birch
General Manager/Head of Finance – Charlene Sheridan

Bankers

First Trust Bank
11 – 15 Donegall Square North
Belfast
BT1 5GB

Independent auditor

CG Taggart Accountancy Services
17 Cypress Crescent
Donaghadee
Co Down
BT21 0QG

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Structure, Governance and Management

Governing document

The charitable company is controlled by its governing document, its Articles of Association, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

Governance of the charity

During the period under review the directors met at least 7 times, usually at bi-monthly intervals. Trustees/directors are appointed by nominations, made in writing by any existing director. At the General Meeting nominated directors are appointed by election. The trustees have overall responsibility for the organisation and for directing the activity, ensuring it is well run and delivering the outcomes for which it has been set up.

The day-to-day management and operation of activities is carried out by staff led by the senior management group comprising Operations Manager Caroline Birch and General Manager/Head of Finance Charlene Sheridan, supported by Company Secretary Craig Brown, and reporting to the board at each meeting.

Related parties

None of the trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charitable company.

All Directors and Senior staff complete a conflict of interest register annually in respect of potential transactions between Charter NI and its connected parties.

Pay policy for senior staff

The pay of senior staff is reviewed annually. In view of the nature of the charitable company, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other community organisations working within the sector.

Risk management

The principles of good governance are embedded within all aspects of Charter NI's operations with management and staff being keenly aware of the Board's responsibility of ensuring that the organisation protects itself from financial exposure and reputational damage. A close working relationship is maintained between the Board and management to ensure that operationally staff are aware of the standards required of them by the Board and that the Board are always in a position to provide guidance and support to management in the discharge of their duties. This two-way relationship is a key feature of Charter NI's governance arrangements and is a key strength of the charitable company.

A conscientious approach to ensuring that contractual project requirements are achieved has been maintained at all times both in the accounting period being reported on and since Charter NI's establishment. All financial commitments are maintained at all times, there are very tight financial controls on expenditure and project staff have been trained and have become experienced in budgetary controls. In both these areas ie project delivery and financial controls management, all staff have established close working relationships with funding organisations to ensure all mandatory standards are consistently achieved. Board representatives also actively engage with funding bodies.

The Board, management and staff are fully aware that the nature of the work in which Charter NI is involved can bring with it a high level of scrutiny to ensure that all activities are fully compliant with funding requirements and, therefore, beyond reproach. The Board of Charter NI is, therefore, greatly reassured of the charitable company's compliance with the highest of standards of governance on the basis that all monitoring and evaluation of project delivery demonstrates achievement of all funders' objectives and that funders' audits and vouching of financial expenditure and the statutory audit confirm compliance with both probity and regularity in the use of monies received.

During the accounting period, and since, Charter NI has maintained close working relationships with funding bodies. Charter NI has taken part in verification visits from The Executive Office, SEUPB, International Committee of the Red Cross and Urban Villages. These checks have resulted in a positive track record of the highest professional standards achieved.

Currently Charter NI, and all other organisations in the community and voluntary sector, look forward to the new financial year with considerable uncertainty around government budgets.

Charter NI will continue to look to our successful project track record and proven financial probity as the best means of continuing to achieve the positive impact and benefit to our communities which we have achieved in recent years. The trustees continue to assess the major risks to which the charitable company is exposed, those related to the reputation, operations and finances of the charitable company, and are satisfied that the systems are in place to mitigate any exposure to the major risks.

C.H.A.R.T.E.R. FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Communities Having a Response Towards Economic Regeneration
(A company limited by guarantee)

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Trustees' report (including Directors' Report) for the year ended 31 March 2023

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees (who are also the directors of Charter NI for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and 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 (FRS102);
- make judgements and accounting 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; and
- 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 adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and 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. They 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.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the company's website.

Statement of disclosure of information to auditors

The trustees at the time when the Trustees' report is approved have confirmed that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a director in order to be aware of any information needed by the charitable company's auditor in connection with preparing their report and to establish that the charitable company's auditor is aware of that information.

Independent auditor

The auditor, Grace Taggart of CG Taggart Accountancy Services has indicated her willingness to continue in office and a resolution that she be re-appointed will be proposed at the annual general meeting.

Approved by the board and signed on its behalf:



Albert Hewitt - Chairperson



Craig Brown - Trustee

28 November 2023