

Supporting Communities for 100 years



COLLABORATIVE
HOUSING



OXOIL



COMMUNITY HALLS
DIRECTORY



HALLS AND
ENTERPRISE



COVID-19
RECOVERY



PLANNING AND
PLACEMAKING



TRAINING



COMMUNITY
ACTION

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

A challenging year but a successful one



↑ GILL BINDOFF

I am pleased to be able to report that the financial year has ended, as last year, with a small operational surplus. This is attributed to careful and effective management and the Board is grateful to the Joint Chief Executives for this good outcome.

Community First Oxfordshire is the host of a new support hub for community-led housing groups – Collaborative Housing. Government funding for the hub is channelled through CFO and, as is required by the Charity Commission, the funds

appear in the CFO accounts although they are restricted to use by Collaborative Housing. For accounting reasons, funds to be spent by Collaborative Housing in the financial year 2020/21 appear in the CFO accounts as a surplus.

Our small team of staff have again shown their strong commitment to working with local people to help them achieve the benefits their communities want. The support which we offer to community halls and community shops helps them to flourish and our service is increasing in demand. Our work with neighbourhood plan groups is continuing and expanding to support groups which are working to deliver or review their plans. Our work in helping communities to integrate well with new development is also increasing and the importance of planning for placemaking at early stages of housing development is becoming much more widely understood.

The Board and staff have worked together on a strategic plan for growth of the organisation over a five year period. This is challenging work given the uncertainties facing the voluntary sector in the next few years. However, CFO is in a strong position to achieve the organisation's ambitions and to continue in helping communities meet their needs.

The end of the year coincided with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic which has brought some fundamental changes to the way in which we work. The Board is very impressed with the capability and resourcefulness of the staff in coping with very different ways of working and in maintaining their usual high standards in very difficult circumstances.

Gill Bindoff

Chair

FOREWORD

Beyond the pandemic

Reflecting on 2019, while much of what CFO did was successful and valued by communities and our supporters, it seemed like it happened in a completely different world.

COVID-19 has upended our lives. Physically, we are distanced as never before. Yet, conversely, perhaps we have never been as connected. The grassroots surge of activity at the outset of the pandemic – often not waiting for local authorities, agencies and yes, organisations like CFO to take a lead – has been inspiring. Mutual support is strong and ongoing.

Community was never forgotten, the sheer range of groups and activity across Oxfordshire is testament to that. Yet the COVID-19 response suggests a wider rediscovery of it. This new activity is hugely valuable. It needs to be supported as new patterns of living become more established. It offers a glimpse of the collective action required to respond to that other major threat facing us: the climate emergency.

CFO is working with communities and our partners to find out the support needs for new (and existing) groups and the key challenges facing communities. We are developing new online mutual support initiatives. We are rolling out new ways to deliver our services and creating exciting new training packages.

Community is connection – we are all learning from each other as we come together in different ways. 2020 is CFO's centenary year. From the interwar crises to post-1945 social change and now COVID-19 and the climate emergency, CFO has adapted to the times to ensure that our services continue to reflect what communities need.



↑ TOM MCCULLOCH
JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVE



↑ EMILY LEWIS-EDWARDS
JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

IMPACTS!

THE ISSUE

Taking forward a Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan project about meeting the housing needs of older people.

WHAT WE DID

Worked with the Neighbourhood Plan group and Cherwell District Council to design a tailored survey for residents.

Neighbourhood Planning

CFO's Neighbourhood Planning service continues to be very busy. In 2019, we supported eight groups in all five districts of Oxfordshire. All are motivated by working within the existing planning system to make development work best for their communities.

There is much evidence that even where a final Neighbourhood Plan has not yet been 'made' developers constructively engage with NP groups – proving the old adage that

the journey is as important as the destination. A NP is a very useful 'crash course' in planning. As a steering group member told CFO: 'if you know how to play the game there's a chance of winning!'

Neighbourhood Planning has been around for a number of years. Some early adopters are now updating their original Plan, taking account of changing circumstances. Nowhere is this more apparent than in relation to the climate emergency. More are more

groups are very keen to make best use of the NP tools at their disposal to develop localised policy and project-based responses to global heating.

LOOKING AHEAD

We'll be promoting and celebrating the value of Neighbourhood Planning – if your community wants to shape future development and identify other community issues that need to be addressed it is the most useful tool in the box.

↑ NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES CAN BENEFIT LOCAL BIODIVERSITY, WILDLIFE, AND GREEN SPACES

Placemaking

CFO believes that development is not just about houses, and infrastructure does not just mean roads, power and water. It also means social infrastructure. It means releasing the gifts and energies of all of us to create thriving places to live, work and play. In 2019, CFO delivered several projects with that aim in mind.

Blenheim Estate and Woodstock Town Council commissioned CFO to undertake a Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This involved a deep-dive community consultation to identify the physical and social infrastructure needed for Woodstock to continue to prosper and thrive.

In addition, we continued our placemaking programme at Heyford Park. This 3-year project

centres on a community development worker embedded in the community, working with residents to develop new grassroots-led initiatives to meet local needs.

More recently, CFO has been commissioned to run the Community House on a major development site at Graven Hill, outside Bicester – our aim is to establish the House as a hub for community activity.

LOOKING AHEAD

There might have been a lull in building but thousands of new homes are still coming to Oxfordshire. We'll be continuing to seek opportunities with developers to roll out projects that put social needs at the heart of new development.



↑ GRAVEN HILL DEVELOPMENT



↑ WOODSTOCK COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

IMPACTS!

THE ISSUE

How to engage more young people in the Woodstock Community and Infrastructure delivery Plan consultation.

WHAT WE DID

Liaised with the schools and held sessions with student leaders > students attended public meetings and joined community groups such as Sustainable Woodstock and the Youth Group.

Collaborative Housing



In 2019, CFO became the host organisation for a new, Thames Valley-wide support service for community-led housing groups – Collaborative Housing. Our aim is to support communities to find solutions to their housing needs themselves.

Many people do not have access to good quality, secure and affordable housing. While lots of housing development is underway, owning a new home will remain largely out of reach for many. This is particularly the case for younger people, single-person households and households earning an average income. Rental prices are also going up and up.

From co-housing and community land trusts to co-operative and self-help

housing, we support all kinds of community-led approaches. The benefits are many, from genuinely affordable homes to more cohesive communities, improved well-being and tackling the climate emergency.

Collaborative Housing started operating in November and it has been non-stop ever since. We are actively supporting around a dozen community groups and

have undertaken two major research projects for West Oxfordshire District Council and the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

LOOKING AHEAD

We will be launching an online support platform. We want to build CLH as a community and a movement. This will be a place to socialise and learn from each other, and access training, toolkits and support from Collaborative Housing staff.

> www.collaborativehousing.org.uk

IMPACTS!

THE ISSUE

How to raise the profile of community-led housing in the County.

WHAT WE DID

Lobbied for and obtained Oxfordshire Growth Deal and West Oxfordshire District Council funding for the Collaborative Housing Hub to deliver two major research projects.

Upper Heyford 'Placemaking'

Our community development project continues to deepen its roots. The lunch club continues to be a 'draw', with 15 regular attendees. It has become a popular place to socialise, with some of the more vulnerable residents now feeling comfortable in coming along. This helps us build relationships and find out more about peoples' need. We have referred several people to Age UK and other agencies for additional support.

We have also supported local residents to take over the youth group that was due to close. A group of parents has stepped in to run the group on alternate Saturdays, allowing a popular local hang-out for young people to keep going. In addition, we've run community feedback sessions ('what's tops and what's pants'), worked with the

Resident's Association on a summer event and supported several ventures through our community action fund, including the community garden, the scouts group and the youth group.

COVID-19 led to a step-change in our activity. Unable to run the lunch club, we shifted our activity to making and delivering food parcels – at the peak, we supported 75+ residents at Heyford Park and in surrounding villages.

LOOKING AHEAD

Physical distancing does not mean social distancing – we're working on creating an open space for people to come together safely to grow fruit and veg. This would also have seating and sheltered areas.



↑ COMMUNITY EVENTS - SUMMER EVENT ON THE VILLAGE GREEN AND CHRISTMAS LUNCH



↑ DELIVERING FOOD PARCELS

IMPACTS!

THE ISSUE

Emerging tensions in a volunteer-led community development project.

WHAT WE DID

Facilitated reflection sessions bringing together volunteers called Listen In, Listen Out.

Community Shops

Environmental sustainability has been a dominant theme for community shops. CFO has offered advice on how shops can add to their green credentials by increasing their refillable range, for example. Many shops already have detergent and washing up liquid refill stations, but some are now adding pasta, rice, and other dried staples. Milk vending machines are also being considered to cut down on the use of plastic bottles.

As ever, those running community shops are incredibly busy. However, there is a real sense of camaraderie in the network. CFO holds regular catchups, where people maintain connections and learn from each other. Popular subjects of discussion this year have been card reader charges, scams on card machines, volunteering recruitment strategies and tips, and making the most of seasonal events. Elsewhere, post offices are taking on more banking

duties due to the closure of local banks. CFO has been working with a group which is lobbying for better support for PO's which offer these vital services.

LOOKING AHEAD

Advocacy, advocacy, advocacy! COVID-19 has proved that community shops are a lifeline for older people and the vulnerable. We'll continue to support shops on the ground while making a case with the powers that be for additional resourcing.



↑ FINSTOCK VILLAGE SHOP

Community Halls

As with community shops, environmental sustainability has been a major trend. We hosted meetings and workshops on this subject and rolled out a new template for environmental and energy audits. Halls are particularly well-placed to respond to the climate emergency- imagine if all of Oxfordshire's 280+ halls ran on renewable energy and had electric car charging points?

CFO's full-spectrum support service continues to be popular and incredibly well-used. There's never a down day, from day to day advice on a huge range of

topics, training on trustee roles and responsibilities and rolling out a County-wide community buildings survey through to bespoke volunteering advice and promotion and support of the Village Halls Improvement Grant Fund. And much as we're here for the community, communities are there for each other. Our Local Area Meetings continue to be well-attended events where people value sharing ideas and exploring common issues.

LOOKING AHEAD

A focus on foundations – we know that getting community hall governance right is vital but challenging. We'll be boosting our support, promoting best practice and rolling out trustee training with a focus on safeguarding.



IMPACTS!

THE ISSUE

How to help management committees achieve continued professional development.

WHAT WE DID

Held a series of in-depth training session that took a deep dive into trustee roles and responsibilities.

IMPACTS!

THE ISSUE

How to help our members and beneficiaries find a way through the blizzard of COVID-19 information.

WHAT WE DID

Revamped our website and segmented issues by themes into an easily navigable, updated digest of key information.

↑ SOLAR PANELS CHARGING THE ELECTRIC CHARGING POINTS AT KIRTLINGTON VILLAGE HALL

A year of development and innovation

2020 has been a year of innovation. We have developed the *Together We Can* community development programme and *Listen In, Listen Out* training. These sessions are now being rolled out via Zoom.

The aim of *Together We Can* is to foster equal participation in community-led decision-making and action. We've run these workshops with a number of groups, including with children and young people. *Listen In, Listen Out* focuses on the importance of 'active listening' as a key communication skill

underpinning inclusive and successful community action. Given the challenges (and opportunities) posed by COVID-19 to community action, there is developing interest in this training from parish councils, community development workers, and youth-focussed organisations.

Elsewhere, our work in Woodstock has led to a 'young people's social spaces' project, an emerging partnership to support young people to take a lead in shaping opportunities to meet their social needs. Other partnerships are also being explored, including one

looking at community-based learning. At the same time, there is renewed interest in community-led planning, CFO's gold standard approach to finding out local needs and developing citizen-led, asset-based solutions to them.

LOOKING AHEAD

COVID-19 has galvanised community activity – this feels like a lightning in a bottle moment. CFO will be rolling out support webinars to bring people together and discuss innovative, practical ways of keeping people involved.



AFTER SCHOOL CLUB COMING UP WITH COMMUNITY IDEAS

Keeping the community wheels turning

As always, community transport schemes go the extra mile – whether it is flagging up issues with hospital parking and access (which affects the volunteers and the patients they transport) or providing additional support outside of transport (such as picking up prescriptions and collecting shopping) community transport is always more than just transport. Yet transport itself continues to be a vital need for people and communities – it is consistently in the top three issues for Oxfordshire residents. We need to celebrate and support the 75 community transport schemes in the county!

LOOKING AHEAD

With impacts of COVID-19 in mind, community transport will be ever more important to healthy and connected communities. We will advocate for new schemes and support new volunteers to link in with existing schemes.



THE ISSUE

How to help young people volunteering with YOCO (Youth Challenge Oxfordshire) get the most out of their experience.

WHAT WE DID

Worked with YOCO and held *Together We Can* workshops for young people in Blackbird Leys, Abingdon and Faringdon.

THE ISSUE

How to improve access and parking at the Oxford University Hospital sites on behalf of 100s of volunteer drivers.

WHAT WE DID

Worked with the OUH Transport Team to formally agree OCTA Badge hospital parking permits and review parking limitations to benefit volunteers.

Red Arrow Good Neighbours Scheme



Our small but effective Good Neighbour Scheme (GNS) has a volunteer team of 10 fantastic individuals. We offer volunteer driving to people in Oxford to help them access hospital appointments and other health related requests. We have regular clients who use the scheme every week and people that use the scheme just the once – if our volunteers can help then they will.







LOOKING AHEAD

We're coming for you... 2020 will see another recruitment drive – we want to at least double our number of volunteers!



With our partner, AF Affinity we organised and delivered over 1.5 million litres of oil to our members in Oxfordshire, saving them money and helping the environment. COVID-19 had its impact with demand suddenly increasing, but we adapted our work processes and all orders were completed on time. Prices tumbled, but steadied at around 26ppl ex VAT in the summer of 2020, making it a good time to fill your oil tank before winter.

Income 2019-20

	2019-20	2018-19
 PROJECT GRANTS	£192k	£193k
 OTHER INCOME	£96k	£102k
 COLLABORATIVE HOUSING HUB*	£94k	£0
 INTEREST ON DEPOSIT	£3k	£3k
 INCOME	£385k	£298k
 EXPENDITURE	£327k	£273k

* Community First Oxfordshire hosts the Collaborative Housing Hub. Government funding for the project is received as restricted income, with any income in excess of expenditure being held as restricted reserves for expenditure in future years. £37k of the surplus in 2019-20 relates to this and will be spent in 2020-21.

Resiliency, Recovery & Truly Sustainable Communities



Will Hutton

**Communities
after Covid-19**



Dr Friederike Otto

**Climate
Emergency**



Anneliese Dodds MP

**Housing -
a better world**

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS!

Like much else in these extraordinary times, our plans for marking this milestone have changed somewhat – join our socially-distanced celebrations instead! We're delighted to invite you to a short series of online talks with our very special guests Anneliese Dodds MP, Will Hutton, and Dr Friederike Otto.

Running in the week of CFO (ORCC) was founded – 6th October through to 8th October, a series of webinars will be held looking at Resiliency, Recovery, and Truly Sustainable Communities. This free event is on Eventbrite, to register: <https://bit.ly/3gNFD5r>

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