

Chair's Report at the Annual Meeting

22 March 2023 / 20:00 / Online

Overview

I am pleased to report that the Launton Community Communications Group (LCCG) has had a successful year. Our financial position has remained stable throughout unstable economic times, rising costs and, more locally, the addition of many new households in the catchment. As predicted last year, we sought extra funding from the Parish Council in preparation for the new houses in Launton Mews being completed; the full distribution numbers for the new estate are nearly, but not quite, there now. The Parish Council have agreed to raise their monthly subsidy from £110 to £170 which helps tremendously and for which the LCCG are grateful. Our aim over the long term is only to break even, recognising that we are not a profit-making organisation. However, recent years' exceptional conditions have proven the value of having a financial safety net to withstand financial shocks so we will try to keep a reserve fund for such purposes.

We aim to keep the percentage of commercial advertising space in Launton Lines to under 20% of total pages, which is relatively low for a publication of its type. Even in these straitened times, advertising revenue has held up relatively well; this includes the new pre-booking discounts, many thanks to all advertisers who have stayed with us and committed to further advertising. Thanks to the work of our Advertising Manager, Jenni, we've managed to add new regular advertisers and they, plus existing advertisers, have been switching over to colour adverts too. From the issue-by-issue records that we keep, income has exceeded outgoings on each issue this year.

I'd like to highlight that the continuing success of the LCCG is due to the dedication of everyone involved, including:

- the regular team (Rob C, Matt H, Michael S, Kathy G, Jenni W, Shirley J and new team members this year Toby A and Sam C) who have made the production and distribution of each issue go smoothly
- the distributors, coordinated by Shirley, who regularly deliver *Launton Lines* (LL) to their neighbours
- our advertisers, both those who have supported us for years but also the new regulars who have embraced the colour advertising
- our printers, Lonsdale, who are great value and have managed fast turnarounds over the past year, while also helping to collate some issues
- Steve W and others who maintain communications on the online channels
- Launton Parish Council, without whose grant we would struggle to continue; and
- the contributors, both regular and occasional.

Summary of the past year

- We still keep going throughout a pandemic, a war, a near-recessionary economy and now the prospect of further problems in the banking system!
- We have been joined on the committee by Toby who has the role of Secretary. Thanks also to Sam who has helped this year with treasurer duties.
 - The role of Acting Treasurer is currently being done by Rob, but we've had an offer of help since the last message in the *Launton Lines* from Carina and we're going to follow up on that together when Rob is back in the UK.
- Matt has been producing some great centre-page spreads, more on that in the Editorial Report.
- A consistent following remains for the online copy, and this version means Jenni has fewer hard copies to send to advertisers which reduces admin and costs.

- We had many excellent photographic contributions from Ella, our regular photographer.
- We have been strengthening our processes and systems to keep the running of the LCCG activities as robust as possible.
 - This includes a new Register of Access, to ensure there is a backup for each person for each of the key systems we use.
 - We've added a shared mailbox for the editor account to help ensure both editors are in the loop on email communications.
 - We're also working on a policy and process for photo consent, as this has become an increasingly hot topic lately.
 - Finally we've updated the operating document which will be added to the LCCG page of the Launton website.

The year ahead

- We will aim to carry out a survey of our readership (both Launton Lines and other media).
- Linked to this, we will continue to work on the future vision for the LCCG. The Launton Lines is around 25 years old now and we want to ensure that communications (both content and channels) remain relevant for the next 25 years and beyond.
- We will give further consideration to registering LCCG as a charity.

As always, we would welcome help from anyone who would like to be either regularly or occasionally involved with the LCCG.