



SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

A Message from the Trustees

As we head into the summer, it is quite likely that the events of the previous winter are fading into the dim and distant past. The winter of 2022 just seemed to go on and on and was not an easy one for many people. In the face of rising food and energy bills, just getting through the winter period was a significant achievement. Yet in the face of hardships, we continue to see some light in many areas – people coming to together in their local community, volunteers giving their time to help others and making lives easier. So, we hope in this newsletter that we can share a little bit of the good things that went on in the last six months.

In this edition of the newsletter, we have focused on the different activities and events that we run. While helping those who are struggling with everyday issues is the mainstay of what we do, we are always amazed by the enjoyment obtained by our clients from all of the different things that we organise. It is such an important aspect of well-being, self-esteem and of feeling part of a community and many get directly involved in helping out. And the trustees, staff and volunteers get so much out of it too!

We very much encourage our clients to share with us what they think of our activities, or to write about or draw something that is of interest to them. In this newsletter, we are happy to include a number of different contributions and they are always very gratefully received.

VOLUNTEERS TEA PARTY

We are incredibly grateful to have such a wonderful team of volunteers supporting all of the work we do. So, back in February, we hosted an afternoon tea party at 51 North in Mickleham to acknowledge and say thank you to all of our lovely volunteers.

After we had settled down with a nice cup of tea or coffee and sampled the wonderful selection of delicious cakes, our Client Support Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, Lisa, gave heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of our volunteers, some of whom have been helping us for many years, even decades. Thanks to every one of you for all of the cooking, washing up, driving, chatting, Scrabble games and ongoing support you have given and continue to give. We honestly could not run The Meeting Room with you!

Thank you to 51 North for looking after us all so brilliantly and making the event a memorable one.

Anyone reading this who thinks they might like to give up a few hours a month to help us would be most welcome! We are looking for different types of volunteers, so please check out our website for more details –

<https://www.themeetingroom.org.uk/people-volunteers>

or alternatively, just send us an email to themeetingroom123@gmail.com or call Karen on 07413 978422 for a chat.

Please visit our website: themeetingroom.org.uk

Registered address: 57 Cannon Grove, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 9LP

The Meeting Room (Surrey) is a charity registered in the United Kingdom (Charity number 1165351)

Our Winter Activities

We have managed to fit in loads of activities over the past six months or so. We have had outings, camping trips, picnics and of course, our usual Christmas events too. Add to that our collaborations with other local charities and our regular walks, table tennis and other sessions – well, we have been pretty busy!



In the run-up to Christmas, it is always very hectic organising various events. And so, it was great just to have an evening off and we took a group of our clients to see a wonderful panto at our local theatre – oh, yes, we did! Here is what our client, BEV, had to say about the event.

“He’s behind you! A group of us went to SNOW WHITE at Leatherhead Theatre. We all had a great time and had such a laugh - I’ve never laughed so much in my life! It was just what I needed. The backdrop, lighting and the costumes were truly amazing. The cast captured the audience so well, singing, clapping, catching things they threw into the crowd. I can’t wait until the next one! Well done to all the panto crew. Thank you to The Meeting Room for such a lovely time. What a fab time we all had!”

ACTIVITY DAY & CAMP AT WALTON FIRS, COBHAM - by Client Support Manager, Lisa

At the end of November 2022, we took some clients to Walton Firs Activity Centre in Cobham. It is set in the most beautiful woodlands and countryside. Eighteen intrepid travellers (in Cobham, not really...!!) braved a whole day and night there. We arrived at 9 am, unpacked, had a cuppa and then explored. We had a choice of staying in traditional cabins, outdoor pods or camping out under the stars. As it was late November, we chose to sleep indoors and stay warm. Jenna and Stewart prepared a lovely BBQ lunch, with other clients also pitching in to help. After a short rest, we braced ourselves in readiness for participating in the many activities that are available at the site. The first was ‘Nightline’. It was deep in the woods and one poor soul was blindfolded, whilst another person had to (safely!) guide them through the trail, over and under each obstacle whilst telling them, sometimes frantically, ‘slightly to the left....no no sorry....to the right...’!! To say it was hilarious was an understatement and after crawling through low barrels, climbing over ropes, crawling under nets, balancing on ropes everyone made it to the finishing line just about in one piece!



Our Winter Activities (Continued)

Our next activity was 'Low Ropes'. Teams of 3 people (thankfully with crash helmets on) had to complete up to 4 tasks. Each task required teamwork to be successful, whether it was balancing on ropes, trying to reach a certain point or getting all your team from different platforms to the end. There was a twin rope balance task, there were jungle vines and many other elements to it all and again it was rather funny... as I was the official camerawoman, it was only fair



mind! Our final activity was archery, with varying degrees of success at hitting the target but again it was a great laugh and really enjoyed by the clients and staff. Jenna and Donna (a great team - thank you both!) seemingly effortlessly made our evening meal of spaghetti bolognaise with garlic bread which was really tasty. Other clients also helped with setting tables, condiments, washing up etc. and it's so lovely to see people pulling together this way. When it got dark, thanks to the clients who lugged loads of heavy firewood from quite a distance away, we enjoyed a wonderful campfire! We sat round as the firewood crackled, mesmerised by the dancing flames as we chatted, drank tea and coffee, laughed a lot, some sang and danced (er...no..!). The stars were so bright twinkling above us, it was just a wonderful, magical atmosphere. Later on, in the building, we had a nature quiz. It was a great laugh, no cheating took place (well, hardly any) with the winning team being 'The Winners'! In the morning Jenna and Donna (thank you again, you two stars!) did a wonderful breakfast fry up for us all - some people didn't want this, and some people didn't want that, but they took it all in their stride managing to keep everyone happy. We then all packed up and all helped leave the building clean and tidy and sadly

left. I love trips like this as you get to spend quality time with the clients, you see the teamwork between them, the kindness they show each other and for me the best part is the amount of laughs we all have. And in these challenging times we're living in now, it's so lovely to be able to share these wonderful times with the clients and to know it means so much to them too as it takes them away from their often-hard lives, even if for just a short while, and that makes it pretty special for everyone involved.

CHRISTMAS PARTY AT LEATHERHEAD FOOTBALL CLUB

Christmas celebrations for our clients, staff, trustees, volunteers and supporters started early in December with the football club transformed into full blown party atmosphere with a Christmas tree, fairy lights, food and cakes galore. Our guest of honour was Dr Margaret Chilton, one of the original founders of the Pitstop charity with Graham Peddie and she continues to support The Meeting Room in many different ways. She gave a moving short speech and reminded all of us to try to eat a bit of fruit, vegetables or salad every day to stay as healthy as possible! Our clients welcome the opportunity to thank those who support The Meeting Room in so many different ways. Once again, our helpful clients were fabulous in getting there early to help set up and prepare food. So many people worked hard to make the day a huge success with wonderful homemade salads, quiche, scotch eggs, cakes and treats. Once we were all fed it was time for the competitive, fun Christmas Quiz. Finally, everyone pitched in with the clearing-up and clients took home any leftovers.

CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH IN FETCHAM VILLAGE HALL - by Operations Manager, Karen

This was the first Christmas Day lunch held with guests at the Fetcham Village Hall since before the Covid-19 pandemic. Our experienced team along with over 30 volunteers on the day managed to feed over 60 people with a full Christmas lunch plus all the trimmings - 'best roast potatoes I've ever had' was said by many of our guests! Add to that dessert, presents, cards, crackers and loads of goodies and lovely table decorations and you will get an idea of what a joyous occasion this was. Everyone left with take-away boxes of Christmas lunch, pudding, presents, goodies and looking very happy and content.

We were entertained by a splendid group of local singers, and everybody joined in with all of the songs and it felt very Christmassy.

We are especially thankful to our wonderful volunteers – cooks & kitchen assistants, table decorators, washer-uppers, chauffeurs, meet & greeters, present wrappers, and anyone else who assisted us. It was great fun to work together with a fantastic bunch of dedicated people who put their heart and souls into making our guests happy and endeavouring to make it a special Christmas for them.

A special thanks to the following donators and supporters - F. Conisbee & Son, Bocketts Farm, Ahmadiyya Muslim Ladies Association, Ashted Flower Arrangers, St Mary's Church in Fetcham, St John's School in Leatherhead and Kall Kwik, also in Leatherhead.



BOCKETTS FARM by Client Support Manager, Gayle



In February, over 20 of us descended on Bocketts Farm for a day out. We were really lucky with the weather which was sunny and bright. First of all, we went to the small animal petting session where we learnt about and stroked rabbits, guinea pigs and chickens. We then went and had a lovely time with the ponies, and everyone enjoyed interacting with them. Next, armed with our bags of animal food, we trundled over to the animal sheds where we fed the llamas, alpacas, goats, pigs including a suckling mother with 10 piglets which were gorgeous!

Onto the 'play area, where we found an empty go-kart track. Along with the clients, Lisa, Gayle & Vera took turns racing round the track in pairs. Much fun and laughter was had by us all. We then made a quick return to the field in time to watch the pig racing, cheering and waving flags it was great fun. Tummies were rumbling so it was time for lunch. Huge thanks to our lovely volunteer, Jane, for preparing all the sandwiches and rock cakes and Mary for the yummy lemon cake. A fabulous day was had by all. It is something we will definitely do again. Thank you to everyone who made this day special.

KING'S CORONATION BARBEQUE – LEATHERHEAD FOOTBALL CLUB



To celebrate the coronation of King Charles III on Monday 8th May, The Meeting Room organised a barbeque for almost 60 clients, volunteers and friends. It was our original intention to have an outdoor event, but as poor weather was predicted, we had to be prepared for all eventualities - and even though, we were inside, everyone who came along had a fabulous time! A mountain of burgers & sausages was cooked outside (a huge thanks to George, an awesome guy and an absolute demon with a spatula) and then enjoyed inside with salads and loads of trimmings. Many



volunteers and supporters had brought cakes of various descriptions, so it was time for our first ever 'Bake Off at The Meeting Room'. Each of the cakes were labelled A, B, C, D, etc. and tasted by our panel of expert judges to decide on the best one – I bet Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith were gutted not to be there! And the winner was our former trustee, cook and adviser, Harriet Edgley with her absolutely amazing Chocolate & Raspberry Delish – well done, Harriet, you should get your application in for the real Bake-Off! A big shout out to the runners up who baked the most chocolatey of brownies (Angela) and dreamy lemon drizzle cake (Craig) - it made the competition extremely close, and the judges job a very difficult one.



As we all gorged ourselves with cakes, we had live music from our volunteer, Alice Trevor, who is an amazing singer, plays guitar and writes her own songs. Thank you, Alice, for sharing your talent with us.

We also remembered our founder, Graham, as Coronation Day was also the second anniversary of his passing. Jenna read out passages written by some of our clients from the 'Memories of Graham Peddie MBE' book. As with all of The Meeting Room events, so many people helped and contributed to making the day such a success and everyone went home smiling and very full!

Congratulations to their majesties, King Charles and Queen Camilla.

The Trustees would like to thank KALL KWIK in Leatherhead for printing our newsletter free of charge and we are incredibly grateful that they are so kindly supporting their local community.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER CHARITIES

The Meeting Room is very proud to work with other local charities and we get together regularly to exchange ideas and experiences with the aim of providing a better overall service to our local community. Here are a couple of examples of what we have been doing recently.

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) – Life Skills Course - Christians Against Poverty work with people to help them get out of debt and also deliver workshops on Life Skills that can help prevent people falling into debt. With the current cost of living crisis causing real problems for many people, we were happy when Richard from CAP suggested running some sessions at our Monday drop-in. We asked our clients for their thoughts, and several were keen to try it. Richard proved to be a great communicator showing an understanding and awareness of the current challenges and each week had 6-7 clients keen to listen in, pick up tips and share ideas. They covered topics such as budgeting ahead, ways to save on utility bills, food shopping, cooking on a budget, healthy lifestyles and healthy relationships. Sometimes it was different clients joining for different sessions, so overall a good number of clients benefitted. Richard was very ably assisted by Jenny and Judy also from CAP. We are pleased to have made a new partner and look forward to working on future projects together.

Community Fridge – Slow Cooker Course – A number of our clients have been attending courses at the Leatherhead Community Hub on the benefits of using a slow cooker. Every person attending is given a slow cooker and training on how to use it to make delicious low-cost meals for themselves and their families. The courses will continue to run for the rest of the year and spaces are available.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Just a few words of thanks to the various organizations who have given us funding in the past six months.

Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) – we have continued to receive funding from MVDC as part of the UK governments' Household Support Fund initiative. Over the winter period, we were able to assist over 100 people with paying food, energy and water bills, as well as other essentials. Thank you once again to MVDC for allowing us to participate in this very worthwhile scheme.

National Lottery – In April, we were so pleased to receive funding of £10,000 from the National Lottery. This is the first time we have received funding from this source, and we are extremely thankful to all National Lottery players for their support.

Aviva Community Fund – over the winter period, we have raised £2,000 from our supporters who have donated via the Aviva Community Fund. The fund matches 1:1 any amounts given through their site. Thank you to everyone who donated to us and thank you to Aviva.

Fine & Country Foundation – we are so grateful to the Fine and Country Foundation for their generous donation of £1,500 to be used to directly assist those in need in our local community.

SUMMER FUNDRAISING EVENTS

We have two events going on this summer, both with the aim of raising funds for The Meeting Room. Whether you fancy a wonderful choir singing showbiz favourites, or Westhumble's very own version of Glastonbury, we have just the event for you. Thank you to our wonderful supporters for arranging these events - your time and generosity are very much appreciated.

Saturday, 10th June at 4 p.m. - The Ladybirds Choir - That's Show Business! Venue - United Reformed Church Hall, West Street, Dorking RH4 1BS

Saturday, 22nd July, from 3 p.m. - FestHumble '23 Music Festival. venue - The Stepping Stones Public House, Westhumble Street, Westhumble, Dorking RH5 6BS

Please check our website for further information

Client Contributions

Our client Dominic enjoys writing and has previously written poems for our newsletters and more recently has been writing longer pieces of prose. He writes when he feels inspired and sometimes this will be in short bursts over several weeks. This is a short extract from his recent 5-page short story 'THE RIVERBANK OF DREAMS'. Dominic dreams he is on trial for not sharing with his sister. The court room judge is a heron accompanied by 2 jackdaws:

..... Just a few moments later into the drama by the river a pair of jackdaws with a dash of silver- grey colour around their necks landed, closer still, around my feet. "What my sister doesn't know she doesn't need to know- how very interesting young man," said the nearer one with a teacher like voice demanding my full attention. I felt myself tremble just like being berated by my old school master, Mr Jones, in front of all the class, due to uncontrollable moments of teenage classroom antics. Even the piercing white-blue eyes of the jackdaw were identical to Mr Jones. I immediately raised my head almost helplessly skyward and slightly to the right. Perched high in my favourite oak tree, a mere two feet from the grassy and flowered riverbank, was the most dreamlike vision of all. The most grand of grey herons adorning a black gown as befitting any court room drama. I gulped audibly into the searing heat. My skin prickled with the ever-increasing drama. I gazed in awe of this heron's grace, every movement in this bird was nigh on perfect. The yellow eyes mirroring truth and impeccable judgement. The heron then descended a full forty feet from the treetop to the ground in one sound vertical drop, the seemingly magical gown unfolding to support the short flight to the riverbank. The gown then returning immaculately into place, shielding the majority of the bird's body from view. Just an elegant long supple neck and beak to see. "Ummn, I see young man, you have been experiencing a great deal of conscience issues on leaving your family home and the sad loss of your mother some eight years ago. Ummn, how very distressing that must have been for you and your loved ones. We are your guide to goodness and grace and to your credit Dominic, you recognise this. Your love of Mother Nature is both your redemption and your imagination and, in this case, has brought you to our attention. We in the bird world honour both your difficulties and your blessings. If there is a lesson to be learnt from the world of spiritual mastery, in your case it would be DO NOT FEAR THE UNKNOWN BUT KNOW WHEN TO BE FEARFUL."

Our client, JAN, was inspired to write this poem about what is going on in our country and in our world.

REFLECTIONS

What has gone wrong with Our World?
Where is the Joy?
Our Queen gone,
New King – what does all this mean or bring?
New PM Liz Truss – how long did she stay?
Not long and then it's bring in what's 'is name!
Weather wise – good question
Where has the sun gone?
Rain, showers, floods, rain -Oh Lord not again.
On top of that strong winds and yet more rain,
Goodness gracious is there a drain?
Wet, Wet, Wet (Excuse me was that a pop group?)
Oh, please rain go back to Spain or down the flipping drain.

SATURDAY 25th MARCH, SPONSORED WALK FOR THE GINGER CAT HOUSE & RESCUE

Hi, my name is Jenna Warrilow, and I'm a client of The Meeting Room. Unfortunately, me and my partner Kaylea had to rehome our little kitten, Luna. So we asked Lisa Cullen to help us find her forever home. A few days later Lisa came back to me and said she had found a lovely lady who takes in cats & kittens and she fosters them out, puts them up for adoption or she keeps them herself.

Me and Lisa booked an appointment with this lady for a Saturday to take little Luna to her. As we pulled up to this house, I was so amazed with what I saw even from outside. We waited patiently until we were asked to come into the house. I couldn't believe my eyes there was all different types of cats and kittens there either looking for their forever



home or they were already full-time residents. The lady talked us through the process of what, when and how things happen there and also told us all the stories for each cat she had. She also mentioned that the charities that were able to help people & families with their pet's vet bills for neutering both females & males are having to put a stop to that in a few months' time and they will struggle with this. She mainly relies on sponsors and donations from the community and she is going to have to now put rules in place so the cats & kittens get the help they need before coming to the home (which is very sad). Once all the paperwork was completed for our little Luna it was time to leave.

We got back into my car to start the journey back home. Things were a little silent at first with my brain going mad with all the thinking I was doing. I finally said to Lisa, "I think I'm going to sort out a sponsored walk so we can raise some money for this lovely place." Everything moved very quickly from then. I made up our sponsorship forms and a little poster for people to read before giving over sponsors. I also created an online platform where people would be able to donate too (unfortunately that didn't work out as no one used it).

Days went on and my forms were filling up fast. I arranged for the walk to be on Saturday 25th March 2023 at 10.30am. A few people came to join us with the walk. It was so nice to see other people participate in this activity. Once we all met up there was an incredible 8 of us along with two little doggies! We started at the Sunshine Cafe in Leatherhead High Street, walked up to Norbury Sawmill, stopped for a little while to have a hot chocolate with a slice of lemon drizzle (made by Craig Taylor) and then we was off heading back to Leatherhead High Street where we began.

As people who know me will know, I have physical health problems with my back, legs and hips. I knew I was going to struggle to do this walk and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to do it, but the support from the people who came along with us helped me so much. They were all so caring and made sure I was ok and made sure we had lots of breaks on the way up the big hills we climbed. I DID IT, I GOT THERE AND BACK! I went back to The Ginger Cat House & Rescue on Thursday 30th March 2023 to hand over all the money we have raised for them. The total amount we finally raised is £426.07 Thank you to everyone who donated and came to support us on the walk.