

# ANNUAL REVIEW

2017/18



Making a difference to lives in Shropshire

# Shropshire Rural Communities Charity

**Shropshire Rural Communities Charity (RCC) is committed to making life better for everyone living in Shropshire.**

We help people improve their prospects with access to work and volunteering opportunities, and give a helping hand to those in need through small grants. We support people to stay active and connected to their community and to maintain their health and independence so they live life to the full.

We work with local meeting places and groups to build thriving communities and we partner with organisations and policy makers to make sure the people of Shropshire have a fair voice.



## Chairman and CEO's Report



Looking back on the past year there are some big numbers that we're proud of. Over **2,000** people attended our Hearing Loss Support clinics, almost **1.5m** litres of oil was brokered for our community fuel scheme and just under **£11,000** was administered in small grants.

But for us the small numbers are just as important. **One** woman wanted to take part in our Boccia tournament even after all her teammates dropped out. We made up a team from other competitors so she could play. **Two** visually impaired people travelled by bus every month to get to our Sight Loss Support cycling activities in Shrewsbury. When the bus timetable changed, we changed the time of the group so they could still attend. A **two**-day trip on a barge was arranged by our support workers for Care and Share, a group made up of people with dementia and the loved ones who care for them.

It is these numbers, these stories, which give a true sense about who we are and why it's so important we're here. But it's getting harder. Funding is becoming more difficult to find, and austerity measures that are affecting organisations like ours are also affecting the people who need support the most.

This means it's more vital than ever that we continue our efforts to focus as an organisation, seeking out new ways to bring in funds, like our highly successful charity event hosted in Ellesmere by the High Sheriff in October 2017. And through the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers and Trustees, we are committed to continuing to make a difference to lives in Shropshire.

**Hugh Strickland**  
Chairman

**Julia Baron**  
CEO

## The Challenge

### Living in Shropshire

- Shropshire has an ageing community, with young people moving away from the county to find employment and educational opportunities and more affordable housing.
- Shropshire is one of the most sparsely populated counties in England – at 0.9 persons per hectare (the UK average is 4 per hectare).
- Loneliness is a growing problem for people living in isolated communities who struggle to access activities and services further afield because of health, disability, caring responsibilities or travel problems.

### Working in Shropshire

- People living and working in Shropshire have lower earnings than the national average, with the median weekly wage at £470.80, compared to the UK average of £550.
- There is a reliance in the county on jobs in low paid sectors including agriculture, tourism and food and drink.

### Delivering services in Shropshire

- Government austerity measures have resulted in a decline in services in rural areas.
- Delivering services in rural areas is more expensive per head of population than in urban locations.
- The rollout of improved technology, which has replaced traditional access to services elsewhere, has been affected by poor infrastructure.

## How We Helped in 2017/18

**385**

the number of people who attended our health and wellbeing events

**1,457,045**

the amount of litres of oil brokered through our community fuel buying scheme

**2079**

the number of visits to our Sight and Hearing Loss support clinics

**£10,886**

the amount distributed in small grants managed by Shropshire RCC

**950**

the number of hours of volunteer time supporting people with Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

**308**

the number of people given energy efficiency advice or training by our Energy Champions

**85**

the number of Wheels2Work clients supported through loans and/or travel advice

**119**

the number of enquiries to our community building support service

**£2,125**

the amount of money donated to our Winter Warmth campaign from winter fuel recipients

**30**

the number of teams that took part in our annual Shropshire Boccia tournament

## Combatting Rural Isolation

**In 2017/18 we continued to deliver and support a range of schemes which help to tackle rural isolation in Shropshire.**

We helped people to stay fit, well and connected in the community by hosting talks about managing long term conditions such as diabetes, healthy eating and falls prevention. We also arranged physical activities for older people and organised events to keep people active in their community.

In October 2017 we hosted the fifth annual Boccia tournament, which saw 52 participants take part in the final in Shrewsbury. Boccia is a disability sport that is sociable and accessible, and we were able to introduce it to more people through the running of six taster sessions.

Our work to support people to live more independently continued through the hearing loss peer support services we facilitate. New hearing aid wearers were able to attend our volunteer-run drop-in clinics, which received over 2,000 visits, or have a session at home. The majority of volunteers are hearing aid wearers themselves and offer support and advice to help people adjust to their aids.

In 2017/18 we also continued to recruit volunteers to act as a personal advocate on behalf of people in care homes who lack capacity under the Mental Capacity Act and who are being “deprived of their liberty”. Everyone who is deprived of liberty must have someone appointed to act as their representative. Our volunteers visit and speak on behalf of the relevant person when there are no family members or friends to carry out this role. During the year 27 volunteers were recruited and became active and a further seven were in training. 450 visits (totalling over 950 hours of volunteer time) took place.

## Our Impact

**A Shropshire RCC volunteer highlights just how vital our hearing loss support services are**

“Mrs G was not wearing her aids when I arrived. She is very disabled and has arthritis in her hands. She lives alone. The only way this lady can visit clinics or her doctor is by using a taxi, £12 per visit, which she finds too expensive. The support service is vital to her.

“Mrs G practised fitting her aids, and we talked about general maintenance. I marked the Shropshire RCC phone number on the card and wrote a note to go with her brown book to Audiology, for future use, requesting batteries.

“As I was leaving, Mrs G remarked that she could now hear her clock ticking and as she pushed her walker to the door – the sound of her feet.”



## Tackling Rural Poverty

**Our aims to develop, maintain and expand innovative practical solutions that tackle rural poverty and bring economic benefits to people in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin continued in 2017/18.**

Our Wheels2Work project received over 200 enquiries from people looking for help getting to work. The scheme provides transport advice and offers short-term loans of mopeds and electric bikes, helping people move from benefits to work, start a career and support themselves. In 2017/18, we supported 85 clients with vehicle loans.

Through the Big Energy Saving Network two staff became Energy Champions to help reduce energy costs for vulnerable customers. They supported 225 people directly, and trained over 80 frontline workers to give energy advice to their customers.

We brokered the purchase of 1,457,045 litres of oil through our bulk buying fuel scheme, saving an estimated £43,711 for Shropshire residents living “off gas”.

We also received over £2,000 in donations from people in receipt of Winter Fuels payments for Winter Warmth – a fund to support those in fuel poverty.

In 2017/18 we continued to help deliver the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme. Funded by European Social Fund and the Big Lottery, BBO aims to support individuals to overcome multiple complex needs, and build confidence and resilience. We provide guidance and volunteering opportunities to get people to a point where they can secure work.

## Our impact

### ‘Godsend’ BBO client takes steps towards employment

Nina (not her real name) had not worked for six years because she suffered from anxiety. After meeting with her, we arranged for her to start a retail placement in a charity shop.

Nina settled in quickly and was soon volunteering for two mornings per week. A couple of months later the shop manager shared that Nina would always offer to do extra shifts and described her as a “godsend”.

The next time we spoke to Nina she confirmed she was “thoroughly enjoying” volunteering at the charity shop and would be starting an NVQ in Retail and Customer Service in the New Year.



## Helping Communities to Help Themselves

**In 2017/18 we continued to help communities to help themselves through a range of initiatives.**

We supported a number of groups to use community-led planning principles to undertake consultation and build support for their community ventures. We worked with the groups to guide them through the process - from first idea to the production of their action plan. We also provided a consultancy service on a number of occasions on areas including questionnaire design and data analysis.

We continued to offer a telephone and email support service to community buildings through our volunteer advisor. In 2017/18 we dealt with 119 enquiries from 61 different village halls and community buildings. We also provided funding advice and a "grant finder" service, particularly for our Members.

During the year we took over as Custodian Trustees for Grindley Brook Recreation Rooms, as all previous Trustees had died and the recreation rooms had been demolished. The funds will be distributed locally to support other projects benefiting the community.

We also organised two training events: one for new Trustees about their responsibilities and another about GDPR compliance for small charities, both of which were oversubscribed.

We continued to offer small grants to groups to support their work through funds we have available, either from the yield from our endowed funds or through grant schemes we operate on behalf of others.

## Our Impact

**Fund helps local group deliver placements in community cafe**

Shrewsbury-based A4U gives support to empower people with disabilities of all ages, their families and carers. They received a grant from the Shropshire Community Fund, which helps voluntary and community groups to start or grow their activities around health and wellbeing.

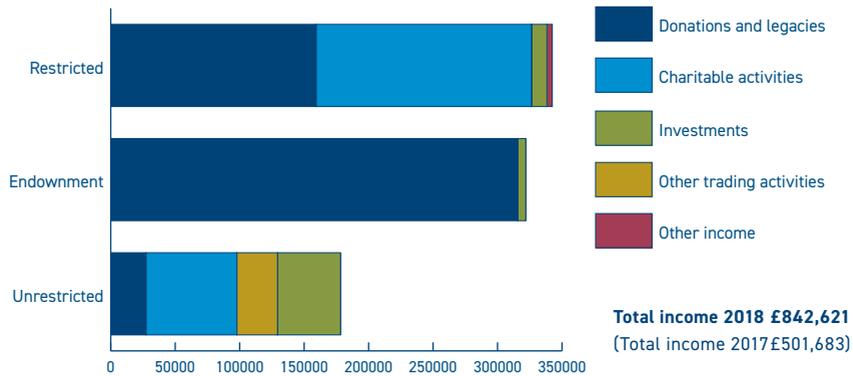
A4U Chief Officer Fiona Williams said: "The Community Fund grant has enabled us to develop our activity providing placements for people on the Autism Spectrum within our community café.

"We currently have three placements ongoing for individuals on different days of the week. All have had difficult experiences elsewhere and find a quieter and less pressured setting more conducive to developing their skills. We are seeing significant improvement in their confidence and capability and they seem to have fun whilst they are doing it! They are able to develop their social interaction with small groups of people and in a friendly and accepting environment."

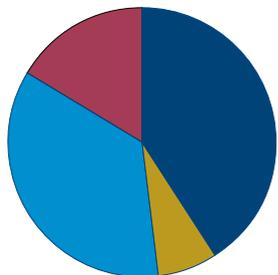
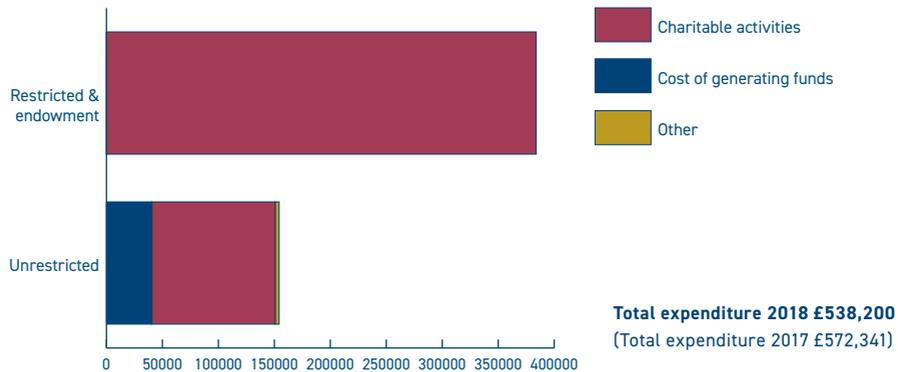


# Financials 2017/18

## Income



## Expenditure



<b>Total Funds</b>	
General funds	£793,006
Endowment funds <sup>1</sup>	£684,991
Designated funds	£314,959
Restricted funds	£140,553
<b>Total funds 2018</b>	<b>£1,933,509</b>

(Total funds 2017 £1,624,470)

<sup>1</sup> Endowed funds are funds invested in perpetuity for the sole purpose of distributing the yield as small grants to other voluntary and community organisations

## Balance sheet as at 31 March 2018

	2018		2017	
	£	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Tangible assets		<b>658,026</b>		674,481
Investments		<b>1,067,860</b>		737,604
		<b>1,725,886</b>		1,412,085
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Debtors	<b>37,030</b>		169,604	
Cash at bank and in hand	<b>472,696</b>		377,467	
	<b>509,726</b>		547,071	
<b>CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>(51,061)</b>		(68,543)	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>458,665</b>		478,528
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>2,184,551</b>		1,890,613
<b>CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>(251,042)</b>		(266,143)	
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>1,933,509</b>		1,624,470
<b>CHARITY FUNDS</b>				
Endowment funds		<b>684,991</b>		364,195
Restricted funds		<b>140,553</b>		179,653
Designated funds		<b>314,959</b>		180,123
General funds		<b>793,006</b>		900,499
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>1,933,509</b>		1,624,470

At 31 March 2018 the charity's free reserves were £134,981 (2017: £113,702).

The financial statements were independently examined by Whittingham Riddell LLP, approved by the Trustees on 4 October 2018 and signed on their behalf by Mr H E D Strickland, Chair of the Board of Trustees.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you for helping us to make a difference to lives in Shropshire.

Aaron & Partners LLP	National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
Big Energy Saving Network (National Energy Action)	National Energy Action
Building Better Opportunities	Oswestry Lions Club
Programme funded through the European Social Fund and the Big Lottery Fund	Royal Bank of Scotland
Caring Enterprises CIC	Shrewsbury & Telford Hospitals NHS Trust
Community Foundation for Shropshire & Telford	Shrewsbury Society of St George
Co-operative Group Ltd	Shropshire Council
Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs/Action with Communities in Rural England	Shropshire Masonic Charitable Association
Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs/Action with Communities in Rural England	Shropshire Star (Cash for your Community)
Ellesmere College	Sight Loss Shropshire
Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin	Sir John Sumner's Trust
Good Things Foundation	Taylor Graphics
Healthwatch Shropshire	Tanners Wine Merchants
Masonic Charitable Foundation	Telford & Wrekin Council
Meres & Mosses Housing Association	Three Parishes Big Local Partnership (Big Lottery Funding)
Mid-counties Co-operative	Utility Aid
	Waitrose Community Matters
	Westcroft Trust

We would also like to say a special thank you to those who:

- donated, sponsored or helped us raise funds at the High Sheriff charity event in Ellesmere in October 2017;
- donated or raised funds for our charitable services, including the Shropshire RCC Hearing Support Service; and
- donated their winter fuel payments to our "Winter Warmth" grant fund for those in fuel poverty.

Finally, we would like to thank the volunteers who give up their free time to help us deliver our much-needed projects.

## How you can help

**Become a member** - By joining Shropshire RCC you will help us to continue delivering our vital work for communities across the county.

As a member you will receive all the latest news, updates and information relating to our work and have access to knowledge and expertise in helping communities become more sustainable economically, socially and environmentally.

**Volunteer for us** - From hearing aid support to bike maintenance, we have a diverse range of activities that volunteers can get involved in.

**Raise funds for us** - If you like what we do and want to help by organising event, get in touch! We can offer advice plus provide you with publicity materials such as posters and flyers to help you to promote it.

**Make a donation** - By making a one-off or regular donation, your generosity can help some of the most disadvantaged people in Shropshire to enjoy an improved quality of life.

**Hire our equipment** - We offer a loan service on office equipment to community groups and voluntary organisations. We also have a collection of vintage crockery available for hire, plus a smoothie bike – a great addition to any fundraising event!

For more information on how you can help, please contact us on 01743 360641, email [enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk) or visit [www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk](http://www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk)



# Making a difference to lives in Shropshire

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Shropshire RCC is the operating name of the The Community Council of Shropshire, a Company limited by guarantee (4652487) and Registered Charity (1096779)