

ANNUAL REVIEW 2016-2017



Shropshire Rural Communities Charity

Making a difference to lives in Shropshire

ABOUT US

We are an independent charity dedicated to enhancing the health and wellbeing of people and communities in Shropshire. We are committed to making Shropshire a great place for everyone to live, no matter what challenges they face. Our work seeks to reduce the disadvantage that results from living in a rural area: poor access to services and support; greater vulnerability to isolation, poverty and poor health.

For nearly 60 years we have been supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable people and their families in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. Service users are at the heart of everything we do and our skilled and experienced staff develop personalised and flexible services. We deliver practical solutions to rural problems through projects which:

Tackle rural isolation:

- We keep older, isolated members of the community healthy, well and independent.
- We give family carers the chance to meet others and have a break from caring.
- Our hearing impaired volunteers turn their own hearing loss into something positive by helping others with sensory impairment.

Alleviate rural poverty:

- We help people to understand energy efficiency measures, and run a community buying scheme for oil, LPG and logs to save people money.
- We help people overcome transport barriers through our “Wheels2Work” scheme to help people take up a job offer, and become economically independent.
- We deliver small grants to people who need a helping hand.

Help communities to help themselves:

- We promote volunteering as a route to employment, social engagement and personal well-being and promote excellence in volunteer management.
- We deliver training, advice and funding to community organisations.
- We give particular support to village halls to provide key facilities in rurally isolated areas.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO LIVES IN SHROPSHIRE

Chairman's Report 2016-17

In the last 12 months, we have taken some significant steps to become more focused as an organisation, and to avoid being over-reliant on public sources of funding. Indeed, we further increased our unrestricted funds this year - which can be re-invested in meeting our charitable aims for the long-term.

We have made it a strategic priority to concentrate on three key objectives:

- Tackling Rural Isolation
- Alleviating Rural Poverty
- Helping communities to help themselves

and at the same time develop resilience and strong financial framework to keep doing these things on a long term and sustainable basis.

Some notable successes are:

- Our Wheels to Work programme had applications from nearly 300 people and provided transport solutions to 104, enabling them to get to work in the early stage of their career;
- Through our bulk-buying of oil scheme, we have saved Shropshire residents over £34,000 in heating costs;
- Sight or hearing loss problems can lead to real isolation for people - we have helped with these issues for over 2,000 people in the last 12 months

During the year there have been some changes to our Board. Through retirement we said goodbye to highly valued Trustees Charles Lillis and

Gordon Grant. We are grateful for their many years of combined service and the support given during that time, which has seen great development in the work of RCC. Their enthusiasm and contribution will be sorely missed.

We appointed new Trustees, Ciaran Martin and Carl Johnson during the financial year and since the year end, Julia Clarke and Nicola Cooper. These new Trustees bring a wide range of expertise including strategic management, governance, finance and human resources. The Board is working well with energy and enthusiasm, and with a regular willingness to challenge viewpoints and situations. We are very fortunate as an organisation with our reputation we have had no problem with recruiting really good trustees.

Staff, as ever remain our most important resource - without them we have no RCC, and no ability to help the people of Shropshire. I thank them all for their hard work and commitment.

Finally, we also wish to express a sincere thank you to all of the volunteers who give their time so generously - a very conservative estimate of over 6,450 hours in total (a 50% increase on the previous year) - in supporting the RCC and enable us to reach so many people in Shropshire through their commitment and dedication.

Hugh Strickland

TACKLING RURAL ISOLATION

Shropshire's population is an aging one. Currently the average age is 45 years and 21% of residents are over the age of 65 years. The number of 65+ year olds is expected to rise from 61,000 to 82,000 by 2020.

43% of people live in rural areas where social isolation and loneliness are particular issues. The lack of affordable or accessible transport prevents them from staying connected to their communities, which may be made worse by failing eyesight or hearing, nervousness about going out following a fall, or anxiety about crime and antisocial behaviour. Increasingly, in a digital age, people are being excluded if they are unable or unwilling to get on-line. Poor broadband access in rural areas makes the problem worse.

Our work seeks to help people stay well, healthy and living independently in their own homes, as well as remaining connected to their community through social activities and volunteer visits.



Sight Loss Opportunity Groups

Shropshire RCC facilitates Sight Loss Opportunity Groups (SLOGs) once a month for registered blind or visually impaired people in Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow. The groups have trained volunteer sighted guides and people to help with guide dogs so that everyone can join in. Groups have a varied and interesting programme throughout the year including:

- Speakers who can advise about equipment, services and products that can make life easier for people with sight loss;
- Talks and demonstrations from interesting and inspiring speakers
- Outings to places of interest such as Haughmond Hill, the British Ironworks and a horse drawn canal boat trip;
- Ten Pin Bowling, Walking for Health, cycling and rowing for the more adventurous!





CASE STUDY

Musketeers and Maidens

The Musketeers & Maidens Group was formed when the Shropshire Council - run Grange Day Centre for disabled adults closed in July 2011. Musketeers & Maidens meet twice a weekly for fun, friendship and group activities and the group has gone from strength to strength since its creation, thanks to support from Shropshire RCC. Funds have been donated by Shropshire Masons, Gro-continental and Veolia and these have enabled the group to enjoy days out to RAF Cosford; Theatre Severn for the Christmas Panto; Ten Pin Bowling; and a boat trip on the Lyneal Trust Boat "Shropshire Lass". The "M&Ms" also compete in the annual Boccia tournament organised by Shropshire RCC's Wise & Well Team.

project outline



Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

During the year we were awarded the contract to deliver a new service of volunteer representatives under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards regulations.

DoLS applies to people aged 18 or over who are being accommodated in a hospital or care home in order to receive care or treatment, where the person is unable to make this decision for themselves because of an impairment or disturbance in the functioning of their mind or brain. Everyone who is deprived of liberty must have someone appointed to act as their representative, usually a family member.

Our contract involves finding and training a volunteer for those people in Care Homes who do not have a family member to be their representative. The scheme commenced in September and the contract will run for three years.



Active Buddies

Research has shown that physical activity is vitally important for the physical and mental health of people of all ages. Many older people feel isolated in their own homes and would like to be more active but the idea of facing a lot of new people in a new environment, such as an exercise class, is very daunting. An Active Buddy could give them the support and confidence they need to take that first step to socialising, feeling fitter and having fun.

Shropshire RCC's Wise & Well Team are running a pilot project in Oswestry to support older people who would like to

become more active in partnership with the Oswestry "Social Prescribing" Pilot.

SRCC Active Buddies volunteers meet the older person and accompany them to their chosen exercise opportunity such as a gentle exercise class, a Walk for Health, a local gym, or sports club. After a few weeks, when the client has had a chance to make friends and feel more confident to attend the activity on their own, the Active Buddy will withdraw to support someone else.

This is a one-year pilot project funded by a grant from Everybody Active Shropshire.

Tackling Unemployment

Shropshire supports a low wage economy, with workplace earnings significantly lower than national or regional averages.

This arises from Shropshire's traditional reliance on jobs in low paid sectors such as agriculture, tourism, food and drink. In 2013, the median wage for Shropshire was more than £70 less than the rest of Great Britain.

Our work seeks to make living in a rural area more affordable through enabling people to take up employment prospects through assistance with transport, and helping local residents to have more disposable income through cost-saving measures and grants.

Project Outline



Building Better Opportunities

Shropshire RCC is one of twenty partners delivering this programme, which is funded by European Social Fund and the Big Lottery. It seeks to support for people furthest away from the labour market, and move them closer to a position where they are able to secure work. Our role is to provide volunteering opportunities to build participants' confidence to be "work ready".

Wheels to Work



Shropshire RCC has been running a Wheels to Work scheme since 1995 and has helped thousands of people break the cycle of "no transport, no work - no work, no money - no money, no transport. We have seen a reduction in funding for the scheme this year but despite this, 272 people sought help and 104 were provided with transport of some kind to enable them to get to work. Based on a calculation of part time hours and minimum wage, scheme beneficiaries earned over £425,880 during their time on the scheme.

The impact on the life of beneficiaries is clear from Edward's story:

Edward, age 32 from Whitchurch, started working for Culina (a 15-mile commute from his home) on a temporary contract. Due to poor rural transport links, he initially lift-shared in a co-worker's car, but when his co-worker resigned, it left Edward unable to get to work. At risk of losing his job, he contacted **Wheels2Work** for help. Staff got him through his provisional test and on the road a 125cc motorbike within a month. A month later,

knowing that Edward now had his own means of reliable transport, Culina offered him a permanent contract.

Edward loves his motorbike commute and is passionate about the impact that the Wheels2Work scheme has had on his life. Edward is now saving hard to pay for a full bike test and ultimately to buy his own motorbike,



Fuel Poverty



The latest population projections suggest that by 2033, over a third of Shropshire's population will be aged 65+. Older people living on fixed incomes can struggle financially, particularly with heating costs and reliance on taxis when there is no public transport

Our support to improve the quality of life for people includes projects which tackle the challenge of fuel poverty (where a household has above average fuel costs and if they meet those costs are left with a residual income below the official poverty line). We have a

team of trained **Affordable Warmth Champions** who give low level advice about cost saving measures and assist people to switch to lower tariff electricity suppliers. We were a Gold Partner during the Big Energy Saving Week initiative in October. During the period, our Officer engaged with 170 Consumers including 1:1 advice, formal presentations and home visits to support vulnerable consumers. 26 events were organised and an average saving of £155 per consumer was achieved on energy bills.



Project Outline

Community Fuel Buying

Our popular community bulk buy fuel scheme is designed to reduce the cost of heating oil for people living in "off-gas" areas of the county. During the year we brokered the purchase of 1,143,450 litres of oil saving an estimated £34,303 for Shropshire residents, which was comparable to the previous year. In addition three households made a of LPG supplier saving them around £300 each. Two new pieces of associated work were delivered this year: We were one of a number of RCCs raising awareness of Smart meters, and we also entered into a partnership with a local community forest to supply bulk logs to fuel members.

Case Study

Winter Warmth Fund

We are very grateful to those people who have donated their Winter Fuel Payments to us to distribute to people who are in greatest need:

Judith had a fixed low income and was in receipt of pension credits. Her boiler had an intermittent fault and was unreliable so she struggled to keep her home warm. Two separate heating engineers recommended urgent replacement before it failed completely but Judith had no savings. Working with Marches Energy Agency, we identified several sources of funding for Judith to enable her to get a replacement boiler in time for Christmas. **Grant awarded = £150**

TACKLING
RURAL
POVERTY

HELPING COMMUNITIES HELP THEMSELVES



CASE STUDY

Community Buildings Conference

30 people representing 22 community buildings gathered at Dorrington Village Hall in March to attend the first Shropshire RCC Community Buildings conference for a number of years. The programme had been developed in response to requests from member halls and focused on keeping community buildings sustainable into the future.

The big topic of the day was funding, with a keynote speaker from the Big Lottery. Other speakers and workshops covered “is your hall adequately insured?”; saving money on utilities; engaging with the local community; and governance. Llanymynech Village Hall went away £100 richer after winning the prize draw from our sponsors, Utility Aid. The excellent facilities at Dorrington, great catering from Rushbury Village Hall and plenty of opportunity to network with other halls, ensured a lively day of information sharing and inspiration.

Shropshire RCC provides support to other organisations so that they can make a difference to the people and communities they serve. This particularly includes small, volunteer-led and newly formed organisations working in the rural areas where services are hard to access. We provide advice, training, volunteer matching and funding to help these groups.

We provide particular, specialist support to Community Buildings and Village Halls. These provide vital meeting places in remote rural areas and committee members benefit from our support to understand and comply with relevant legislation as well as help with funding to help with long term sustainability of the buildings.





Community Engagement

Community Consultation is an important process to ensure people are able to share their views about the place they live and the services they receive. Shropshire RCC helps local people to get involved in shaping the future of their community by working with groups and organisations to carry out consultation activities, often through the community-led plan process but for any purpose where evidence of need, opinion etc. is needed including funding applications.

We support people to come together to establish working parties and steering groups and plan their project. We help design questionnaires and carry out surveys, run workshops and consultation activities. We can suggest the best way to engage with the intended target group and can suggest and support a host of activities especially for different age groups too. We have assisted many groups with projects including understanding the need for play facilities or identifying support for a community-owned shop or pub. We ensure that consultation is impartial, robust and inclusive.

“Thank you so much for all your support during the project. Your guidance and knowledge has been invaluable and helped make the project an enjoyable experience for all the members of the steering group”

*Sally Herbert -Jones
Chair of Melverley Parish Plan
Steering Group and member
of the Parish Council*



CASE STUDY

Trinity Trebles

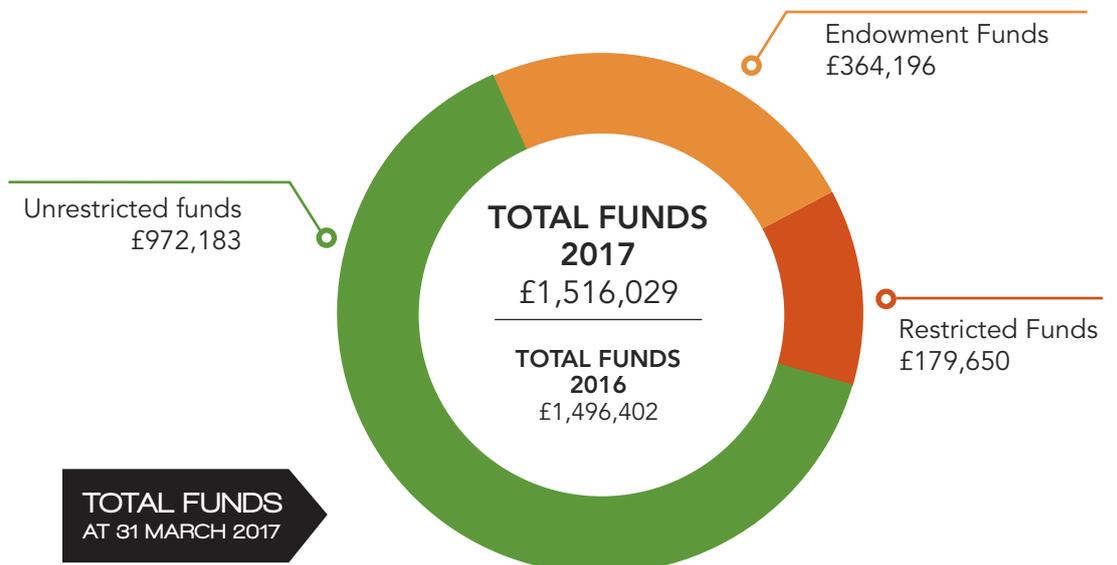
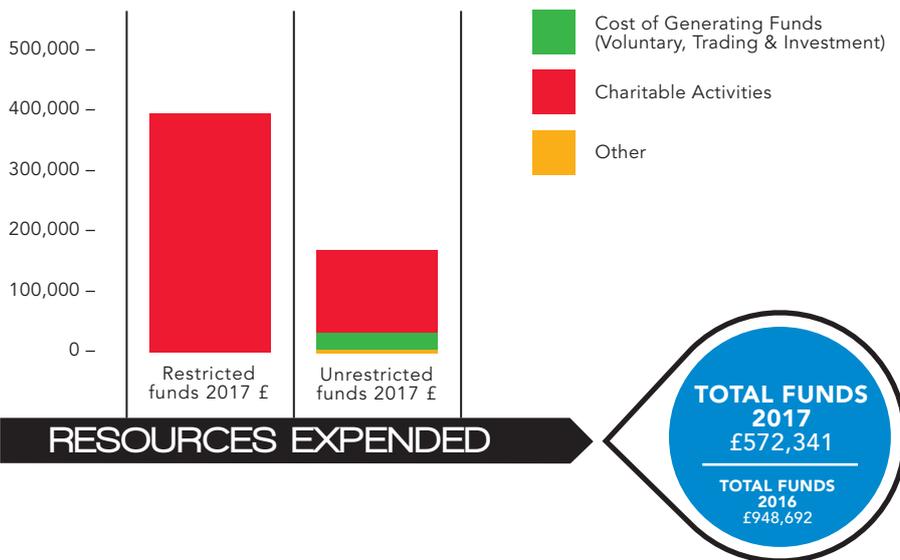
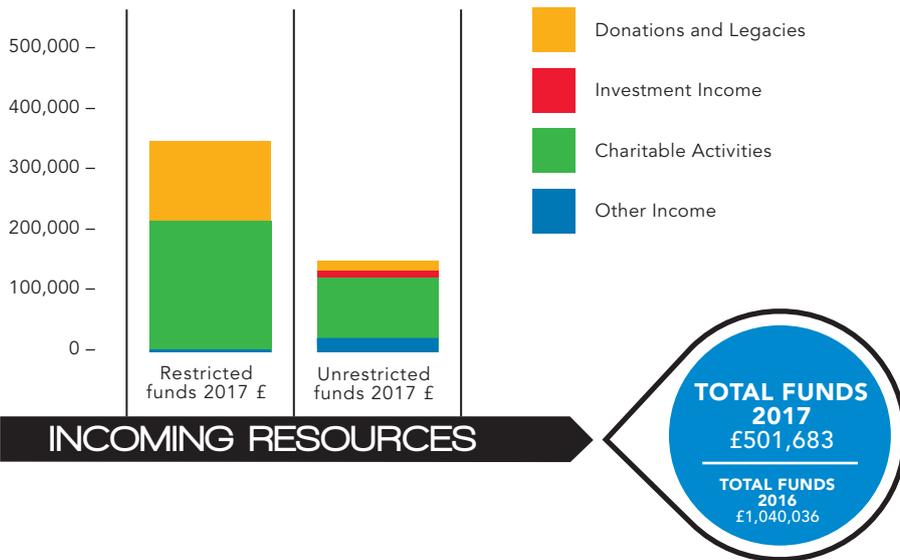
Shropshire RCC manages a number of small grant programmes (including our own Endowed funds) and these small grants make a significant difference to small groups in local communities.

Trinity Trebles children’s group applied for a small grant to purchase music and t-shirts to help their small group of 8 to develop and thrive. Within just a few months the group had grown in confidence, the numbers had swelled to twenty, and they have been able to raise money from their performances to make them sustainable.

“Trinity Trebles is a real success story and the grassroots grant we received from the RCC has been a significant enabler. Thank you.”



Statement of Financial Activities (including an income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 March 2017)





	2017		2016	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Assets		674,481		714,295
Investments		737,604		633,699
		1,412,085		1,347,994
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	61,163		54,509	
Cash at bank and in hand	377,467		469,753	
	438,630		524,262	
CREDITORS:				
amounts falling due within one year	(68,543)		(90,377)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		370,087		433,885
TOTAL ASSETS				
LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,782,172		1,781,879
CREDITORS:				
amounts falling due after more than one year		(266,143)		(285,477)
NET ASSETS		1,516,029		1,496,402
CHARITY FUNDS				
Endowment funds		364,196		311,493
Restricted funds		179,650		234,343
Unrestricted funds		972,183		950,566
TOTAL FUNDS		1,516,029		1,496,402

The Trustees consider that the charitable company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 ("the Act") and members have not required the charitable company to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Act..

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 28th September 2017 and signed on their behalf by

Mr H E D Strickland, Trustee

The Community Council of Shropshire is a company limited by guarantee. Registered number 4652487.



In our drive to become more independent of statutory funding, we have continued to hold fundraising events and solicit public donations, and we are very grateful to everyone who supported us. The highlight of the year was a concert by BBC2 Naked Choir competition winners **The Sons of Pitches** at Ellesmere College, which netted over £3,000. Royal Bank of Scotland staff continue to support us, and we were delighted to be chosen as a Charity Partner by Shrewsbury Town in the Community. This included three bucket collections on match days, which generated over £1,000.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO LIVES IN SHROPSHIRE

We would like to thank the following whose grants, donations, fundraising, sponsorship and "gifts-in-kind" have financed our work this year:

Aaron & Partners LLP
Albrighton Parish Council
Albrighton Relief in Need Charity
Audiology Services, Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust
Baron Davenport's Charity
Big Energy Saving Network funding through the Department of Energy & Climate Change
Bridgnorth Lions Club
Bridgnorth Town Council
Brewin Dolphon
Building Better Opportunities Programme funded through the European Social fund and Big Lottery Fund
Church Stretton Rotary Club
Calverhall & Ightfield Women's Institute
Donnington & Boscobel Parish Council
Ellesmere College
Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
Gro-Continental Ltd
Groundwork UK 'Carriers for Causes'
John & Margaret Wootton Trust
The Kelton Charitable Trust
Ludlow & South Shropshire Hearing Club
Lanyon Bowdler LLP

Marches Care Ltd
The Millichope Foundation
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Newport Lions Club
The Prince's Countryside Fund
Royal Bank of Scotland
Rural Community Action Network funding through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Shropshire Council
Shropshire Masonic Charitable Association
Sight Loss Shropshire
Steven Oliver Photography
Telford & Wrekin Council
Three Parishes Big Local Partnership (Big Lottery Funding)
The Tinder Foundation
University of Keele
Veolia UK Incentives
Village SOS programme through ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England)
Waitrose Community Matters
Westcroft Trust
Women in Rural Enterprise (WIRE)

We would like to say a special thank you to those individuals who have donated or raised funds for our Shropshire Grassroots Endowment Fund and Shropshire RCC Hearing Support Service, and to those individuals who donated their winter fuel payments to our "Winter Warmth" grant fund for individuals in fuel poverty.

We would also like to thank those organisations who donated prizes for our Grand Christmas Raffle, and we are grateful for the continued support of our members: community groups, parish and town councils, voluntary organisations, village hall committees and individuals



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Shropshire RCC is the operating name of the Community Council of Shropshire Charity number 1096779 Company limited by guarantee number 4652487