**Chair's Report Morecambe Bay Foodbank AGM Friday 28th April 2023**

Strange as it seems I am going to start my report by describing us as a continuing failure. This is because we still exist. Ever since Morecambe Bay Foodbank started we have been working to put ourselves out of existence by ending the need for foodbanks. This aim is shared nationally by the Trussell Trust and its network of well over 400 foodbanks, of which we are part. Sadly, each year that passes this goal gets further away and our services get ever more important. It is truly shocking that in the sixth biggest economy in the world so many people are unable to afford decent food for themselves and their families. We are supposed to provide “emergency food for people in crisis”, but more and more people are living in a state of almost permanent crisis. Food inflation is running at almost 20% year on year, and even many people in paid work cannot make ends meet.;Our Manager, Briony, will give more details of current need in her report.

Whilst this need continues to exist and grow we have to adapt and change to meet it. I am very pleased to report that the last year has seen great advances in how effectively the foodbank is run.

We have established ourselves in these wonderful new premises.

We have a superb new manager and staff team.

We have maintained and even increased our level of donations, both of food and money.

We have a brilliant volunteer team.

We have a great set of trustees.

We are providing not only food but an ever increasing amount of school uniform.

I want to thank each and every donor, whether that be donations of food, donations of money or donations in kind. There are so many that I cannot mention them all individually but I would like to draw attention to the following:

MA Cleaning; Heysham 1 & 2 Power stations; Infinis Energy; Sedburgh School; Premier Line; Printing Plus.

I want to thank all our partners, those in referral agencies who let us know who needs help, especially Lancaster City Council with whom we have built a close relationship during and following the pandemic, and those other organisations such as food clubs who also help to reduce food insecurity in this area. Briony in particular works really hard to develop supportive links and working relationships for effective partnership working.

I want to thank every staff member: Briony for her leadership through a difficult time; Gail for her awesome contribution to administration; Janet for keeping the finances organised and for keeping the Trustees organised; and our newest staff member Paul for maintaining the efficient operation of the warehouse and logistics.

I want to thank each and every volunteer, without you we cannot exist.

I want to thank all the Trustee Board for their efforts towards providing strategic direction, and particularly John who has worked so hard to ensure that we have a long term lease on this building, and to get it fit for purpose.

All of this since the pandemic however just contributes to an incredibly efficient food and school uniform delivery service. We do not get to meet our clients (except for our wonderful delivery drivers) and we are not able to signpost them to the wider support they might need to tackle the issues that led them to need the foodbank in the first place. The Trustee Board has looked at this and with some help from the Trussell Trust Pathfinder programme have initiated three new projects. The aim of this programme is “to end the need for foodbanks”, which as I mentioned earlier is very ambitious.

The first project is funded through the Trussell Trust Pathfinder Programme. The Schools Project has commissioned a full time Citizens Advice worker to support parents directly in schools. I am pleased to welcome Jeni to the foodbank family. We are partnering with schools as they are the agency most trusted by parents, and the first to notice when a family may be struggling. We are starting out with 9 pilot schools, with a mix or primary and secondary, and spread across the district.

The second project is funded through our own resources. This is possible due to our very successful fundraising and generous donors. Once again we have commissioned a Citizens Advice worker to support those clients who receive their first referral to the foodbank. I am pleased to welcome Florian to the foodbank family. Florian may also expand his work to include support for those who seem to have a longer term need for the foodbank.

In each of these projects the aim is to provide preventative support to minimise future foodbank use. This will be done by addressing each client's needs and circumstances, helping them maximise any benefits they may be entitled to, assisting in financial management, and dealing with any other problems they may have that contribute to their need for foodbank use. Working in partnership with Citizens Advice North Lancashire means we are providing a much more holistic preventative service rather than just “food as sticking plaster”.Both of these projects have funding for the next two years.

Both of these projects are being done because as a Trustee Board and staff we feel they will benefit our community. One gap however is that we have very few ways for our clients to impact what we do, what their needs are, and how we can support them. Our third project is designed to meet this gap and will enable our clients to impact our strategic direction. We will be commissioning people with lived experience from the Community Comissioners attached to the Poverty Truth Commission to find out what is important for our clients and how we can best help.

As I stated at the beginning of this report it is really sad that we have to exist. Because we do exist we have to make sure we do as much as we can to support people, The last twelve months have moved us on from a difficult time and we are now really strong in all apects of our work, financial, staff, logistics, partnerships, volunteers, management. We are now also expanding our community support as outlined above to continue to work towards ending the need for foodbanks.

Thanks to you all.

Roger Gittins Chair of Trustees Morecambe Bay Foodbank.