



Minutes

AGM: Monday 11th October 2021, 7.30pm – Cobnuts Kindergarten and online participants via Zoom

Attendees

Jacky Witt	Frances MacGregor via online Zoom
Diane Frewer	Julian Ritchie
Cassie Callaghan	Anne Gillespie
Rosa Townsend	Phil Beaumont
Eileen Whitworth	Lauren Beaumont

Apologies: Christopher Turner, Jennifer Barker McCarthy

Welcome

Rosa sat in as Chair for the AGM. Everyone was welcomed.

Minutes and Matter Arising

Minutes agreed from the last AGM.

Chairman's Report

Last year's AGM saw the departure of two longstanding committee members, Jussara and Nadja. We were very fortunate that three new enthusiastic people joined the committee in their stead: Rosa, Cassie and Phil.

Committee meetings during the Covid pandemic took place online via Zoom and were very well attended. During the year Covid restrictions meant that several of our regular events were unable to take place or had to be modified: these included our lantern walk for St Martins, our Advent Spiral, the Stardust puppet play and our May open afternoon.

Interest in Cobnuts remained high, with families very loyal to the setting. This enabled us to remain financially stable and to retain our staff. Our new committee launched initiatives to ensure the kindergarten was well prepared for the future. These included improvements to administration, with greater use of IT allowing the committee to keep a close eye on new interest in enrolment, the ages and proposed start dates for new children. We also planned and launched a Little Explorers parent and child group on Fridays at Fant Wildlife nature reserve.

Our treasurer Warren stood down in the autumn due to the pressure of his other commitments. He left our finances very well organised, and we were fortunate that Maureen, a former treasurer, was able to take over his duties.

In April I had to stand down as chair of Cobnuts due to ill health. The rest of this year's report will be completed by our secretary, Cassie. I have recently heard that Julian Ritchie, a member of the Stardust puppet theatre and so familiar with the setting, is willing to take over as chair at the next AGM, and I wish him all the best.

Over Spring the weather warmed and a new garden working party was formed by the parents. Jobs vary across the seasons, and it is a great opportunity for gathering as a community. The Little Explorer Group went from strength to strength from Spring to Summer, which also lead to interest from attending parents about the kindergarten.



Maureen who had taken on the role of Treasurer after Warren stepped down. Also decided that it was not possible for her to fully commit to the role and so stepped down in July.

As Covid restrictions eased, it was possible to welcome new families to the kindergarten to have a look around. A successful open afternoon was held in June so prospective families had the chance to view the setting and speak to Diane and Lauren whilst adhering to Covid regulations. This led to more children being added to the waiting list for 2021 and 2022 starts.

Anne Gillespie one of our trustees and also long-standing volunteer with Cobnuts decided to retire from her role. The committee wish to express their heartfelt thanks for all the many years Anne has supported the kindergarten and the time and effort she has given. This has led to the start of a parent rota which is currently in its infancy.

Over the summer the committee worked on several administrative duties including the move of the website and updating various policies.

September saw the introduction of the new EYFS Birth to five matters, for which the kindergarten received several exemptions. Frances officially became a trustee of the kindergarten and we also officially welcomed Julian onto the committee. Grant applications have either been completed or in the process of completion in September and October. This should enable the committee to expand the reach of Cobnuts into the community.

As a final note it was heart-warming to see so many old and new faces at our Apple Pressing event. Many connections were made, and there was a sense of community. Something we perhaps haven't felt in a long time and something we hope to take forward in our forthcoming celebrations.

Teacher's Report

We started well with 15 children but lost a few as the term went on, however, these numbers were made up after Christmas. As everyone else our life was dictated by Covid 19 including our equipment usage, cleaning, child wellbeing, staff wellbeing and parents being kept at a distance. We managed but still missed certain things especially festivals and special days where we would usually get parents involved. We said hello to Eileen as a third member of our staff as numbers rose in the summer months. And we said goodbye to Anne who had been voluntarily helping for years as well as covering sickness and training days whenever she could. Thank you, Anne.

At the end of the summer term, a picnic was arranged in Claire Park with all the children and their families which was lovely. We returned in September and no longer had to rotate the equipment which was a relief, Lauren and I were over the moon when we realised this. I have had total support and understanding from our parents and committee parents. We've had work parties in the garden and a parent rota has been put in place to help cover the Thursday. We have a healthy number of children at the moment, although not quite as many as we had anticipated. We will be having four children leave in January for school or relocating abroad. So, numbers and finance will have to be clearly monitored. But until then our children are enjoying being at Cobnuts with the freedom to play imaginatively and socially together outside and inside.

Parent and Child Group Report (Jacky)

From September last year the Wednesday parent and child group continued to run weekly in the Yard Cottage garden. The Friday morning parent and child group also transferred to the Yard Cottage Garden in September, as Covid rules made it impossible to hold it in the kindergarten. It was run at first by Nadja, but in November when she got a full-time job and could no longer continue, Frances took over her role. The groups continued to meet up until the Christmas holidays, although it was



sometimes very cold, and the lawn gradually resembled a hockey pitch! Between 3 and 8 families attended each session.

After Christmas the second Covid lockdown with stricter rules meant that we weren't able to hold the parent and child groups, but by April the rules relaxed, and we were able to restart the Wednesday morning group in Yard Cottage garden. We met each week as long as continuous rain wasn't forecast. Between 3 and 7 families attended the sessions. Since September we have continued to be outside in the garden through choice, but when the weather worsens, we are now allowed to be indoors again. The group continues to be an important social support for the families who attend, and a good introduction to the kindergarten.

Little Explorers Report (Frances)

We initially intended to start up Little Explorers in Jan 2021, but the Jan lockdown happened before we were able to start and we weren't allowed to open. We had had a chance to sort out everything needed before hand including insurance, speaking and meeting with John from Fant wildlife and gaining permission to run the group there, a written risk assessment, a poster and buying all necessary equipment. This meant that when we were about to reopen in May 2021, we were all ready and set to go.

During the summer term we scheduled 10 sessions. When we first advertised the group on Facebook it seemed to go viral (on a very local scale!) with over 3000 people having been reached. We were slightly startled by this, especially, as at the time, due to covid we were only allowed a maximum of 15 people in the group (excluding under 5s). Jacky kindly offered to come along the first session in case we were inundated but we needn't have worried as we had a lovely group size of about 7 families. Over the course of the term, we always had between 3 and 8 families each session with children aged new-born - 4 years. Most families came multiple times with only 2 or 3 coming once. It was really lovely to see older kindergarten children with their younger siblings attend the little explorer's group and the different dynamics having older and younger children involved. This did take some thinking about so that I could provide something for all the ages.

We did have to cancel one session due to dangerously high wind speeds.

Unfortunately, as I have relocated to London, I am no longer able to run the group. We do hope to find someone else to take over in due course, but I think we all feel that getting the Friday group at the kindergarten started may be the priority as having the familiarity of the kindergarten room, helps the children as they settle into kindergarten when they are ready.

Even though this group was not held at the kindergarten, it was lovely to hear that some of the children from little explorers have joined/are waiting to join Cobnuts in the coming year.

Treasurers Report (Jacky)

The last year has been a financially good one for the kindergarten. This is mainly because we continue to be almost full up to our limit of 15 children per session. We were able to give the staff a pay rise in April, and to take on an extra member of staff 2 days a week from April. We finished the financial year with a profit of just over £1000.



Over the last year income from kindergarten fees and KCC funding was just over £7,400 more than the previous year. Spending on running costs was also higher than last year, mainly due to a proportionate rise in what we used (food, craft materials, cleaning materials etc) and also to an increase in insurance costs due to the new outdoor parent and child group.

We had no income from open afternoons or fundraising, as these activities were stopped due to the Covid regulations.

We have put a further £1000 into our reserve account, as this needs to be adequate to pay salaries for 3 months, should the kindergarten have to close.

Over the last several years we have been helped financially by the fact that Anne Gillespie volunteered regularly as an extra pair of hands in the kindergarten, and was frequently available to serve as staff cover should this be needed. Anne is now moving on, and we need to ensure that we have affordable staff cover, as the kindergarten would not be able to pay agency supply staff fees.

Election of Officers

Anne will be stepping down from her role on the committee and therefore as a Trustee. Julian, Frances, Rosa, Cassie and Phil are happy to continue their roles on the committee and as trustees of the charity.

Proposed: Jacky

Seconded: Eileen

Election of Trustees

Julian is happy to take on the role of Chair. Cassie is still happy to continue as Secretary and Rosa has agreed to become Treasurer.

Proposed: Jacky

Seconded: Eileen

Any Other Business

None

Meeting closed

Signed:

Date: