



# AGM Minutes

**AGM: Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022, 7.30pm – Cobnuts Kindergarten and online participants via Zoom**

## Attendees

Julian Ritchie  
Diane Frewer  
Cassie Callaghan

Frances MacGregor via online Zoom  
Rosa Townsend  
Jacky Witt

Apologies: Eileen Whitworth

## Welcome

### Minutes and Matter Arising

Minutes agreed from the last AGM.

### Chairman's Report

At the last AGM in October 2021 our longstanding Chairperson Christopher Turner stepped down due to ill health. As the Trustees quickly discovered Christopher had done an enormous amount of work – quietly and behind the scenes – to help manage the organisation and support the work of our teacher Diane Frewer. It is very sad to report that Christopher passed away early in the year, and we send our heartfelt condolences to Jacky and her family.

Cobnuts continues to be a successful and sought-after kindergarten setting. There are presently four Trustees, but we would welcome others to join us. The Trustees are active participants in the management of Cobnuts, working alongside Diane, and we are very grateful that Jacky Turner has recently joined the management committee.

The successful Young Explorer's initiative had to stop a year ago when the leader Frances Macgregor moved out of the area. However, we were delighted when Frances then became a Trustee, bringing expertise in Steiner kindergarten approaches and deep knowledge of the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. We are very grateful for the work of the other trustees Cassandra Callaghan and Rosa Townsend: Cassie as Secretary, has provided vital and expert administrative support to all aspects of the organisation, and Rosa was willing to step into the essential role of Treasurer and advise on human resource issues including the intricacies of maternity conditions and pay.

Finally, on behalf of the Trustees I should like to sincerely thank Diane for her leadership of the kindergarten and to acknowledge all the extra time she gives to nurture and sustain the health of the kindergarten community.

### Teacher's Report

We had some big personalities in some little children last year, exacerbated, I believe, by the covid lockdown. They needed attention, found social play difficult in various ways and some bought



undiluted play based on characters seen on screens. We had a split group. I had to say parents were good and all of the children enjoyed Cobnuts and our routines.

We had staff sickness which was covered by our team of volunteers. We also had a level 2 student which also helped keep ratios up. This student Ailish enjoyed her time with us and would have loved to have stayed on as a permanent member of staff.

Our long term supporter and Chairman Christopher who made it to our Harvest Festival in Sept 21, despite being very unwell, sadly passed away in January, peacefully and at home. His enjoyment of all things sweet (especially cake!) will always be remembered.

Lauren went on maternity leave in May and now has little Caleb as an addition in Beaumont family life.

Jodie has joined the team as maternity cover and is very much part of the fixtures and fittings. She enjoys working at Cobnuts and with our children and families and is very much appreciated by myself.

Our children have changed with this new school year and life feels more harmonious in Kindergarten. The children are finding friends, playing together and growing together.

The Management Team is doing a great job at supporting Cobnuts and I would like to express my thanks for all you do.

## **Parent and Child Group Report (Jacky)**

Jacky's parent and child groups have seen more chopping and changing this year than in previous years. The Wednesday group continued from September 2021 at Yard Cottage. Sessions were in the garden at first but moved indoors as the weather cooled and dampened. In mid-November the group moved from Yard Cottage to the kindergarten, and the day of the session changed to Fridays. It has continued to run on Friday mornings at the kindergarten, apart from a prolonged Christmas break of 6 weeks in December and January.

A small Wednesday morning group restarted at Yard Cottage in March and ran until Easter when all 3 children attending moved up to the kindergarten. Cassie took over the Friday group in March and continues to lead it.

In September 2022 the Wednesday morning group at Yard Cottage restarted. This remains small, with only 2-3 families attending (whose children may move up to the kindergarten after Christmas). If numbers do not increase, the group may be paused again soon.

## **Friday Group (Cassie)**

There has been a steady flow of families at the Parent and Child Group on a Friday, with the average of around 6 families in attendance. The most we have had is 9 families, some with several children, which was lovely and very dynamic. The relationships built over the past 6 months that I have been with the group have been wonderful with me now seeing a few of our families moving on to the kindergarten. This transition has been joyous to both observe and be a part of. Many of the crafts this term have been easily accessible to the younger hands and we continue to be mindful of this when looking at our planning.



## Friends of Cobnuts Report

As Covid restrictions began to ease, we welcomed in the community to the kindergarten with our Apple Pressing Day, this had wonderful attendance and led us on to our Lantern Walk, which was held again in the gardens at Blackthorn. This was a jovial affair and the children and adults enjoyed the calm and peaceful walk around the garden by candlelight. Not long after this was the Blackthorn Christmas Fair which Cobnuts attended. We set up tables for biscuit decorating and candle-decorating. Both activities were enjoyed by young and old. Next door to this we also held a small Childrens Christmas market which sold items that had been made by the parents, including wooden Christmas trees, packets of Christmas tea and felted mushroom badges. The Garden Gnomes continue to assist in the garden during half terms and spent much of the winter tidying the garden and getting the pots and greenhouse ready for Spring sowing

Alongside this Cobnuts applied for the COMF grant, which awarded Cobnuts a grant of £750. We used this to fund a visit from Jill Taplin who is a Steiner Early Years Advisor who came for a few days to visit the setting and give help and advice to Diane and the assistant. Jill also gave a talk in the evening to parents and the wider community. The rest of the grant was used to create story sacks which would encourage storytelling in the home and involve the whole family so they can experience this part of the kindergarten. We also funded a large amount of play equipment for the kindergarten, including a new set of scallions, apple crates, balance boards and rhythm sticks.

As we moved into 2022, it was decided to help reduce the length of the committee meetings the social side to Cobnuts would be temporarily moved into a sub committee to be known as Friends of Cobnuts (FOC). The first event organised and run by this committee was the May Day Open Day, which again was a lovely day in which many prospective parents came to see what we were all about. And new faces then began to appear at the Parent and Child Group. FOC then held a jubilee picnic in Clare Park, which was attended by current families and led to another family registering interest and their daughter joining in the September term. FOC continues to grow and since September there have been a variety of craft mornings and evenings to create items for the next Blackthorn Christmas Fair. FOC continues to look for engagement opportunities and to create a welcoming environment to the wider community that surrounds Cobnuts.

## Treasurer's Report (Rosa)

Although I have written the treasurer's report this year, I must credit Jacky with doing all of the actual work of the treasuring and bookkeeping!

We finished the year with a loss of approximately £600.

We increased staff salaries in April in line with increases in the national minimum wage, which accounts for most of the increase in expenditure over the previous year. Our energy bills have also increased by about 93% over the previous year.

We have negotiated a reduced rate for our telephone bill with our provider, Virgin

The drop in fees paid by parents (£2445) was more than offset by the increase in fees from KCC funding (£3540)

The funded hourly rate did also increase for the summer term (£4.31 per hour, £5.39 for 2 year olds). It has been agreed to further increase the session fee charged to parents from £18 to £20 for



under threes from January so that it is closer to the amount we receive from KCC for funded under threes.

Our 'other' income of £749.09 was a Covid recovery grant from KCC, the majority of which we spent on an advisory visit from Jill Taplin (£400.70) which benefited the teaching staff, children and Cobnuts families

Despite having made a loss we still have healthy balances on our cash and savings accounts. We have a good number of children in the kindergarten and the balance sheet is in an unusually healthy position for the autumn term (usually we recoup losses from the autumn term later in the academic year).

We have asked for voluntary contributions from parents, suggesting £1 per session to cover the cost of food, craft materials and equipment for the kindergarten. Few families have contributed. We should be able to run our full programme of fundraising activities this year (unlike last year). The apple pressing festival in October was fairly well attended.

We attempted to switch our banking from CAF bank to Metro Bank. It was abandoned in the latter stages because of their unrealistic and unrelenting demands for paperwork! The CAF bank fees have been reduced slightly and Rosa is now a signatory on the account along with Jacky and Diane.

Accounts accepted: Jacky

Seconded: Diane

## **Election of Officers**

Chair: Julian Ritchie

Treasurer: Rosalie Townsend

Secretary: Cassandra Callaghan

**Proposed:** Jacky

**Seconded:** Diane

## **Election of Trustees**

Julian Ritchie, Frances MacGregor, Rosalie Townsend and Cassandra Callaghan

**Proposed:** Diane

**Seconded:** Jacky

## **Any Other Business**

None

Signed:

Date: