

## Committee Meeting – Wednesday 8th February 2023

### Agenda:

1. Attendance
2. Apologies
3. Agree minutes of last meeting
4. Administrators Report
5. Pre-School Leader's Report
6. Fundraising
7. Dates

**In attendance:** Janet Cushing, Lykke Hansen, Jonny Cooper, Siobhan Knifton, Johnnie Padilla, Charlotte

**Apologies:** N/A

Previous Minutes	All agreed/no objections
Pre-School Leader's Report (inc. administrator comments)	<p>Report circulated to committee in advance.</p> <p><b>Annual review of fees - capacity &amp; waiting:</b></p> <p>3 new starters in Jan, 2 of the new children are funded 3 y.o, 1 is a fee-paying 2 y.o. New children settling well. Now up to 25 children on register. Still carrying 5 vacancies, financial impact on budget.</p> <p>4 families on the waiting list who have expressed interest in starting after Easter when child is funded. Will be contacting to get start date booked in ASAP.</p> <p>3 potential fee-paying students with Easter start date, or possibly earlier. Will be contacting to get start date booked in ASAP.</p> <p>Cost of Living has impacted on numbers, people less willing to pay for places at the moment. Hope to report in Summer that all vacancies filled, 32 children inc. fee-payers.</p> <p>Min. is 3 sessions per week, majority fee-payers take up 3 sessions. Minority take 4 or 5, larger financial commitment. Planning on 3 sessions per fee-payers. Funded children entitled to 5 sessions. Currently offering to whoever is available (fee-payer or funded).</p> <p>Planning to promote pre-school after half-term via facebook page. Reserved main promo push subject to outcome of extended hours consultation. Look to build waiting list in the meantime - not all on the waiting list may take up a place.</p> <p><b>Budget Forecast:</b></p> <p>Currently forecast for £8,350 deficit due to vacancies. Faced pressures from ]younger cohort - more fee-paying children..</p>

Increased staff costs from April (min. Wager. increase). Inflationary pressures - Cost of overheads, rent, consumables.

Surplus of £5,000 carried from last year. Sufficient reserves to support in the short term. Need to take action to manage the budget by filling vacancies and cuts from expenditure where possible. Need to promote pre-school and build a waiting list for Sep. Generally think the outcome of extended hours will be crucial.

If next year is equally challenging, may need to look at fee structure inc. carrying vacant sessions of fee paying children and/or wider issues around cost cutting.

**Q:** At what point in the timeline do we know if next year will be as challenging as this year?

**A:** Should know towards the end of summer term about numbers for the year ahead. Aim to have a full register by end-of-term (summer). Sometimes carry 1-2 vacancies forward. If not in this position by given timeframe concerns start to arise.

**Q:** What is our reserves policy and what are our current reserves standing at?

**A:** Current reserves around £45,000. Statutory requirement is 3 months running costs, have more than that. Policy available online.

**Q:** Cash flow accounts don't have month-to-date (MTD) and year-to-date YTD actuals to benchmark actuals against budget forecast. Is this something you do? Hard to benchmark without seeing how budget forecast is phased.

**A:** Committee receives a different account to what Janet receives, a straight forward "in-out" account. At the moment This looks healthy. Management team receives an overall yearly forecast which is now starting to be looked at. Autumn term has different pressures where income is lower vs. Summer term income from local authorities is more spread out over months so cash flow looks better at this time of year and less so in summer.

**Q.** How can parents support getting word out after half-term? In previous years this is something the committee has helped arrange. Amounted to concerted push on Highams Park. facebook groups - post about pre-school vacancies available.

**A.** Planning a mini-push followed by larger push after half-term. Louise & Janet putting together slideshow. 2 pages - closed group and public group. Update page (usually once every half term) w/ photos and slideshows. Plan to use paid promotion on Facebook - c. £15 per week – for the post to get word out trial, money in budget for marketing. More staged promotion when clear steer on extended hours.

**Q:** How can pre-school get word out in the community?

**A:** Suggest trying a coffee morning open to wider community to promote pre-school. Signage highlighting preschool.

**A.P:** *Siobhan to help post flyers in high community footfall locations. Library, Do-Re-Meebies, Bong Along etc.*

**Fees & Admissions:**

Committee required annually to review fees. Request increase fees by £2 per session from April (currently £20 per session). In principle to the go up to £25 per session from September. Caveat however will need to further review fees depending on outcome of extended hours consultation.

3 families identified that will be impacted by fees increase after April. 10% increase in Summer term is reasonable and in line w/ inflation. Places the setting mid-table compared to other settings in area. Some charge more - around £26 per session - some charge less, based on local authority funding rate.

Differential rates depending on age (2 / 3 year olds) looked into. Looking at other settings this is around 50p extra and at this stage no recommendation put forward due to complexity of admin management.

**Q:** Whilst carrying vacancies has "Pay As You Go" model been considered for existing [fee-paying] parents who may want to consider ad-hoc extra sessions, subject to availability?

**A:** It hasn't been considered for children already in the setting, wouldn't be a problem. Bringing in new children would be impacted - all children need a key worker allocated and wouldn't work. Did email around families asking if they wanted to increase sessions but offering ad hoc sessions hadn't been offered. Parent's in the past have asked and have been agreed to if ratios allow. Good point, look at doing after half-term. Need to double check ratios, this :tie of year usually ok but there can be issues w/ 2 y.o.

**Consumables:**

Currently £20 per family per term, costs increased substantially. Look at an increase from Summer Term to £25, and from September £30. This is a voluntary payment.

Approx £800 donated last academic year, £1,700 is total estimated costs (inc. snacks). Parents can donate more or less.

No objections from committee members present.

**Extended Hours:**

	<p>Currently have 19 responses to the questionnaire - approx 6 families without response. General feedback positive on proposal of extended provision of 3 hours per week.</p> <p>Needs detailed consideration of proposals, risks, benefits. Need steer soon due to considerations on impact etc. as will affect negotiations with the church, how the setting is promoted etc.</p> <p><b>A.P:</b> Janet to put written proposal forward to committee to look at. Arrange a meeting to look at a proposal to discuss with the committee (formal or informal) followed by vote.</p> <p><b>Proposal by Friday 3rd March latest. Decision needed by end of this term, Friday 31st March. Committee to meet Wednesday March 8th.</b></p> <p><b>Staffing:</b></p> <p>Now fully staffed, Kirsty started Nov. Staff making good use of the online learning resources available - subscribed to Noodle Now! (<a href="https://noodlenow.co.uk/">https://noodlenow.co.uk/</a>)</p> <p>Trustees required by law to undertake training in safeguarding. <b>A.P:</b> Janet to send around safe guarding course details.</p> <p>Another member of staff signed on to DfE Early Years Professional Development Programme. Louise undertook last year and found it good.</p> <p>Staff pay needs review - Janet to bring to next committee meeting for review, or to review between trustees. Issues being raised around pay/remuneration.</p> <p>Autumn questionnaire - most happy with provisions offered and how their child settled in. Some comments around language development support which will be taken forward. In addition look at Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion (EDI).</p> <p>Christmas concert raised £200, coffee morning last week raised £90.</p> <p>Planning for Holi festival undertaken and sponsored Colours &amp; Patterns day (usually raises around £200).</p>
Fundraising	<p><b>Community Outreach:</b></p> <p>Coffee morning to wider community (to generate interest in pre-school). <b>A.P:</b> Janet to check availability of coffee lounge. Looking at Wednesday or Friday mid-term (Wed 15th/Fri 17th @ 10:00/11:00).</p> <p><b>Summer Fete:</b></p> <p>Usually in May. Need to book sooner rather than later as it takes place on a Saturday and the church need to manage bookings. Suggested dates 20th May (before half term), 11:00 - 14:00. Do in May rather than June as this precedes the later fetes ran by schools.</p>

	<p>Once the date is confirmed the church committee can then take forward. Need large group of parents to help.</p> <p><b>A.P:</b> <i>Towards end of term Janet check in with Charlotte, Siobhan, Lykke re: support requirements and staff involvement</i></p>
Set Date for next meeting	March 8th Extended Hours Proposal. Committee members only.

**Committee Meeting: Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023**  
**Pre-School Leader's Report: Christmas and Spring Term 1<sup>st</sup> Half**



**Capacity and Waiting List:** As we reported in November, the Pre-School continues to carry child vacancies. We had three new starters in January bringing the total up to 25 children on the register. This means we have five vacancies. Two of the new children are funded 3 year olds; one is a fee-paying two year old. All new children are settling well.

We have no children on the waiting list who are able to start this term. Two families who have been contacted want to start their children after Easter, when they will be funded. We will be contacting these families again in the next few weeks to confirm their registration and start dates after the Easter holidays. Otherwise, we are dependent on people applying to the Pre-School between now and the end of term – and are able to offer places for immediate start.

The vacant places and sessions held for fee-paying children place a financial pressure on the Pre-School. We are planning to promote the Pre-School generally via social media, and support from parents is crucial in 'getting the word out'. We also feel that decisions on the outcomes of the extended hours consultation will influence ongoing marketing and promotion of the Pre-School.

**Budget Forecast:** The current budget forecast (updated end Jan) identifies a potential shortfall of around £8300 this academic year. The Pre-School has faced a number of pressures this year primarily low child recruitment; a younger cohort (more children paying fees for longer periods and issues around ratios); increased staff costs (the increase in the national minimum wage from April is unfunded by the Government); and inflationary pressures.

The Pre-School did carry forward a surplus of £5000 last academic year as we were aware that this year could pose challenges. We have sufficient reserves to cover pressures in the short term. However, we are aware that we need to take action to manage the budget. We are looking at trying to fill current child vacancies and at cutting expenditure where possible. We also need to look at how and when we promote the Pre-School to build the waiting list for now and for September. More generally, we think the outcomes on extended hours will be crucial to raising the profile of the Pre-School. However, should next or future years look similarly challenging, we might need to look again at fee structure (particularly the issue of vacant sessions) and/or wider consideration around cost cutting.

**Fees and Admissions:** We usually share annual updates to the Admissions policy with the Committee at this meeting. However this year, the Admissions policy will be reviewed later following decisions on extended hours.

We also ask the Committee annually to review fee levels. The current fee is £20 per session. Following staff review, we are requesting **the Committee agrees to increase the fees as follows:**

- To £22.00 per session from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, a 10% increase on the current fee;

and, in principle

- To around £25 per 3 session from 1<sup>st</sup> September ongoing. We will provide further advice to the Committee on fee levels for September, including an hourly rate, when we look at the next steps on extended hours.

Currently, three families will be impacted by the proposed fee increase after April. We consider a 10% increase for the summer term to be reasonable and in line with inflation.

The fee level proposed is 'mid table' when compared to other similar local settings. Some settings charge more (eg: £24, £26 per session based on current information) and some charge less. Settings charging less base their fees on the funding level for two year olds which, from April, will be £6.15 – or £18.45 for 3 hours. Whilst we continue to hold vacant sessions for fee payers to take up as soon as they are funded, we think charging a higher fee is justifiable. Holding two vacant sessions per week means parents know they can take up five funded sessions once their child is eligible however it does present a financial pressure on the Pre-School as set out above.

In discussions, we have also looked at differential rates for two and three year old fee payers. Some other local settings do this – charging slightly more for fee paying two year olds than three year olds. Generally this is justified by the higher staff ratio required for two year olds. However, this approach is not universal and where settings did charge differentially, it was often a matter of pence per hour based on the LA funding rates. We therefore are not proposing different fees for two and three year olds, subject to Committee feedback.

**Consumables:** we request a voluntary contribution from families towards the costs of consumables and in general families are generous in response. 'Consumables' includes snacks, cleaning materials and some (generally craft or messy) materials we provide in addition to the continuous, permanent play resources. At present, we ask for a donation of £20 per family per term. The cost of consumables has increased substantially over the last year. We are therefore proposing to request a donation of at least £25 per family in the Summer term; and potentially to increase this again to £30 per term from September. Donations are voluntary (we cannot require payments under the terms of our contract with the LA).

**Extended Hours:** With thanks to the families who have filled in the consultation either online or on paper – we now have 19 responses and parents who have not yet contributed to the debate are still able to do so. I also spoke to parents attending the Coffee Morning last Friday. In general, most families are feeding back that extended hours would be welcome. We propose to bring detailed recommendations for next steps to Committee early in the next half term so that a prompt decision on the way forward can be made. This will also inform marketing and offering places for September.

**Staff:** Kirstie DeBoick started in November as a Pre-School Assistant. We are now fully staffed. Staff are making good use of Noodle Now – online training provider; and one member of staff has started the DfE sponsored Early Years Professional Development Programme. One staff member completed this programme last academic year and found it informative and useful – a different staff member has signed up for this year.

**Staff Pay Review:** We will bring further information about staff pay and remuneration to the Committee before the end of term. The review will also take account of issues raised by staff around remuneration more generally and the recognition of professional qualifications.

**Autumn Questionnaire:** thank you to the 14 families who completed the autumn questionnaire. Feedback was generally very positive around issues of settling in, curriculum and keeping in touch. Parents have asked us to give further thought to supporting children's language development, exploring the world around and inclusivity and diversity.

**Parental Involvement & Christmas:** A huge thank you to all the parents who supported the Christmas events. The Concert was fun and hopefully enjoyable for everyone and – despite last minute pressures due to illness and jury service – our VIP visitor made it in to see the children on the last day of term. Committee fundraising paid for the additional Christmas craft and for the books for the children. Together, the coffee mornings and raffle raised around £213.

The Coffee Morning last Friday raised around £90 which will be spent on Easter activities and some 'musical' resources for the garden.

**Janet Cushing**  
**Pre-School Leader**