

**Helmdon Acorns Pre-school
Annual General Meeting
Minutes of Committee Meeting held on
Tuesday 2nd March 2021 @19.45**

Present: Kat Carter (Chair), Mike Ludwig (Treasurer), Siobhan Smart, Anna Saunders, Jess Baseley, Tom Pegg, Pippa Springer

Staff: Sammie Vale (Setting Manager), Sue Morgan (Setting Supervisor), Kim Sadler (Setting Supervisor), Emma Pegg, Lorraine Aust

Apologies: Gina Rayner, Tracey Leach

To agree Minutes of the January 2020 Meeting

It was resolved to agree to the Minutes with no amendments.

Chairs report March 2021

For year January 2020 to March 2021

Under the conditions we have found ourselves having to come to terms with so many changes this year, I think we've had an amazing year here at Acorns. I am so very proud of the whole team, all of whom have shown immense dedication and perseverance during the covid-19 Pandemic which hit us a year ago. We have been dealt some real curve balls through the whole of this year and each time they've flown in Sammie and the team have confronted them with such a calm and unwavering resilience that we have managed to keep the Pre-school in the game even when the odds seemed to be against us.

Thank you to each and everyone of you who have been involved with risk management, decision making, supporting your colleagues, parents and most importantly the children, our children that you have kept so very safe during this last year.

We started 2020 with so many plans for fundraising for the setting and I've been bowled over by the way the committee have been so ingenious with alternative (socially distanced) fundraisers that have taken place over this year. We have had, Sammie's Storytime, Granny's (rather messy) Challenge and birthday fund, Mike's water balloon attack, Jess and Family's massive Christmas Hamper as well as our Halloween and Christmas Trails around the village.....all of which has raised some much needed funds for resources for the setting as well as being put towards some urgent maintenance jobs! My heartfelt thanks to all who have been involved (which I know is all of us!!) and my thanks as well to the people within our community and beyond who have supported our efforts even though times have been hard financially for so many. With the help of funds raised and the efforts of the team and volunteers we were able to put in a much needed washing machine and cupboards to make better use of the space in the disabled toilet. I know that there were also a lot of new, more natural resources put into the room for the children as well, which Sammie may well cover more about in her report later. Although there are still lots of things we want to do within the setting, what Sammie and the team have already put in place has made a huge difference to the children's environment.

Having had to close the setting due to the pandemic at the end of March 2020, we took the decision to Furlough 6 of the team from the beginning of May thus leaving our Management team still 'employed' enabling them to continue to work, keep in touch with parents and children and be on hand to make any decisions with the committee along the way. None of us really knew what was going on or how long the situation would last but during this time the management team kept a very close ear to the ground and worked to update risk assessments, policies and procedures and training. Towards the end of May we were able to open up again with a small cohort of children which consisted of key/essential workers and vulnerable children who attended the setting up until the Summer break.

During the summer break it was decided to update the teams contracts of Employment and we enlisted the help of the local HR Consultant to ensure that the changes were carried out correctly and in-line with current legislation. All the team were involved with each step of making these changes and there were some quite serious issues raised with regards to their current contracts that were in place, but I'm pleased to say that with the invaluable help from the team and committee we were able to rectify these issues and ensure that everything was correct and up to date moving forward.

We were so very pleased to be able to welcome all children back to the setting after the summer break and everyone seemed to settle back into the routine really well. New drop-off and pick-up procedures were put in place to ensure that all on-site were kept as safe and as distanced as possible and this system successfully carried on throughout the rest of the year. Sadly, during December the R number spiked again and as a country we were put into our 3rd lockdown, although the Government suggested that Early Years settings needed to remain open for all children. The decision was made after much careful thought and risk assessment that we would only open for key-worker and vulnerable children and the Preschoolers due to start in Reception Sept 2021. All parents were consulted and kept informed at all times and I'd really like to now thank all of our parents and carers for their understanding and support during the whole of this last year. All of the decisions that have been made during this time have always had the safety of our children and their families as a priority as well as the safety and wellbeing of the whole Acorns team and their families too. As of yesterday (1st March) we have now been able to open up to more of our 2 year olds on a staggered basis with the hope that we'll be back to capacity for the Spring.

During this year we have had some changes to the team. We temporarily lost Rebecca Fletcher to New Zealand for 6 months in October but hoping that she'll be back with the Team towards the end of spring. We also lost [Alex Hart](#) at the beginning of the autumn term but managed to secure a new cleaner in his place quite

quickly, we wish him well with his future at college and thank him for his time working with us. We have, however, gained a new member on the committee, Tom Pegg who was co-opted on during November and we also had a new arrival of baby Phoebe to Anna, Lee and Henry at the beginning of September.

I do also need to say about the very sad news that we received in October about Tracey's Husband Chris. We are all aware of what the family is currently going through and we all have them in our thoughts and prayers for what I am sure will be a very tough time for them ahead. They have an amazing support network around them and we will of course be here to help and support them as much as they need.

I am hopeful that this new year will bring some respite for all from the Pandemic and enable us all to move forward and start to live a little more socially. I know that Sammie and the Team have some brilliant ideas for the outside area and I really hope that we can get some funds in this year to enable us to put the Teams vision into action!

I have said before but this will be my very last year (if I'm nominated again!) as Chair and on the Committee. Saide is moving up to Reception in September and having been involved with the Committee for 6 years it's time for some fresh enthusiasm from some of our newer parents with children still at or due to start at Acorns in the future. I will be looking to have someone volunteer to become Vice-Chair so that I can have this last year to work with and hand over to someone else when the time comes.

Financial Report - Mike Ludwig (Treasurer)

Overview of our audited management accounts

Cash balance at the beginning of the period = **£10,671.00**

- Deposit (Bus) Account = £4,011.00
- Current Account = £6,660.00

Income received during the period = **£97,589**

- Fees = £82,895 (*£19,471 down on than previous period*)
- C-19 Job Retention = £6,019
- Local Authority Grant = £2,500
- Fundraising = £4,645

Expenses paid during the period = **£95,537.00**

- Wages = £77,716 (*£9,529.00 less than previous period*)
- Other expenses align

Cash balance at the end of the period = **£12,723.00**

- Deposit (Bus) Account = £4,013.00
- Current Account = £8,710.00

Observation: Impact of Covid-19 and current situation

- Significant impact on the reduced numbers of children and private fees on the setting - **£19.5k**
- While the accounts show a **surplus of £2k**, it's clear to see that without our fundraising efforts, the Job Retention Scheme and Local Authority Grant would not have been enough to cover our costs.

General Financial Update

- We are still awaiting information about the funding rate for next year (from April) which makes it difficult to plan any increases in fees/stage wages in line with the planned increase again to the National Living Wage.
- We have added the cost of outsourcing payroll and are using a new hosted accounts package called Free Agent. Both services have been invaluable and certainly worth it to ensure that pay and finances are in order and correct.
- All staff had a pay rise in November 2020 in line with an increase in National Living Wage. This was delayed from April 2020 due to the pandemic.
- Balance as of 2nd March 2021 = Current (£5k) + Bus (£4.5k) **Total: £9.5k**

- While not strictly something for this report, it's important to know that income from the first term payments normally act as a bubble in our real world accounts. - we have had a drop in new places this term. This, plus a reduced payment from the Local Authority, means we are still in a precarious position.

Manager's Report - Sammie Vale (Setting Manager)

Manager's Report for Annual General Meeting 2021

As I sit down to write the Manager's Report for this year's AGM I find myself reflecting on the rollercoaster that we have travelled over the past year with so many mixed emotions. I think that I can speak on behalf of everyone when I say that Covid-19 has brought challenges that have not been previously encountered, both professionally and personally. Navigating the Acorns ship has been exhausting, emotional and concerning at every juncture and yet, as I write, the overriding feeling is one of immense pride. At a time when the world was told to stay apart, the Acorns community has pulled together in a way that has been truly remarkable and I genuinely believe that it is for that reason that we have been able to weather the storm and keep our doors open. For that, I cannot thank everyone enough for the role that they have played in making this possible. Covid has, without doubt, presented us with the biggest challenge this year. Financially we have struggled to varying degrees at different points and professionally it has been hard to create an nurturing and stimulating environment that both fulfils our duty to the children and is within current government guidelines. But, against the odds, we've done it!

On Wednesday 18th March 2020 it was announced that all Early Years settings would be closed to all children other than those that were the children of Key Worker's or considered vulnerable. As we only had one child that fit this category we made arrangements to support them with alternative childcare and therefore close to all children from the end of the day on Friday 20th March. We were fortunate that the government continued to give our full entitlement of Early Years funding during this time however, with no private income coming in, we were unable to continue meeting our wages costs and other outgoings. Therefore, the decision was made to furlough Gina, Emma, Tracey, Lorraine, Becca and Alex leaving only myself, Susanna and Kim as working members of the team. During this time, we continued to support children and families by continuing to keep in touch with them at home and offering suggestions for activities that could be completed in lockdown.

On the 1st June 2020 we were delighted to reopen our doors for 3 days of the week to the majority of our preschool children so that we could offer them some support before their transition to primary school, and one child who qualified for key worker status. Whilst the transition was very different to previous years, we were able to facilitate an outdoor visit with Mrs Last from Helmdon Primary School so that the children had the opportunity to meet her before transitioning. We

were also able to successfully complete transition documents for all but one child in conjunction with parents. We were also really pleased to be able to offer these children a small celebration at the end of their time at Acorns with an afternoon tea party. Whilst we were not able to invite parents in for this it was enjoyed very much by the children and were pleased to be able to give them a small send off.

In September we took the decision to stagger the return of the children over the first half term so that we could adequately settle each of them after a long period of absence from Acorns. We started by bringing back our existing cohort of preschool children before adding new starters that were preschoolers and then finally the rest of the children who were not preschoolers. This was successful in that the children were able to adjust to the new routines and staff had the time to ensure that their wellbeing needs were being met before bringing in more children. During this time, we found that the lack of resources available due to government guidance to be a significant challenge. However, thanks to the largely fine weather, we were able to make the most of being outside in the garden. During this time, we were able to bring back Gina, Emma and, briefly, Tracey from Furlough. Lorraine was sadly unable to rejoin us at this time due to a restriction on working in more than one setting in the government guidance however, she was able to pick up some administration hours from home and became flexibly furloughed for this reason. Becca took a career break from the end of September as she and her family embarked on an exciting 6 month adventure living in New Zealand. She plans to rejoin us as bank staff upon her return in May of this year.

Very sadly, just a week after rejoining us in November, Tracey's husband Chris was diagnosed with inoperable cancer at the age of just 42. His Macmillan Nurse advised that the close contact of our work presented a significant risk to Chris and therefore recommended that Tracey should be furloughed so that she could shield to protect Chris. Unless the situation changes, this remains in place until the Easter break when we will review the situation again. I have remained in contact with Tracey and continue to offer our best wishes and support at this very difficult time for their family.

In January of this year we faced another hurdle as the Prime Minister announced that schools would close to all but key workers and vulnerable children but Early Years settings should remain open to all. During discussions with the team, we all expressed concerns about the risk of transmission within the setting with over 40 families a week mixing. With no possibility of separating the children into different groups we made the difficult decision to reduce our numbers once again and offer a place only to children in their preschool year and key worker children only. This was effective in making Acorns safer in the short term whilst the case rate and virus transmission was very high throughout the UK. I am delighted to say that, from next week, we will once again be back up to full capacity.

We have continued to remain committed to our Continued Professional Development and have made the most of any training opportunities - even though these have been largely done remotely! In the last year I have completed my Designated Safeguarding Lead, Health and Safety, Safer Recruitment and Effective Supervision and Appraisal training amongst others. Kim's refresher training for the Deputy DSL role has expired but the training course was delayed due to Covid however it is

now due to be held remotely next week. All staff are up to date with safeguarding training, food hygiene and Paediatric First Aid, although we have 2 that are due to expire when the extension runs out this month.

In March of last year, just before lockdown 1.0, Kim and I attended an excellent training session from EY Consultant Alistair Bryce-Clegg from ABC Does in which he talked about some fantastic ways to organise our curriculum to ensure that we are embodying the Characteristic of Effective Learning which underpin all EY practise. We both found the course to be very inspiring and came back full of enthusiasm to begin implementing changes. Unfortunately, this has been slow thanks to the pandemic but we are finally in a position to start rolling the training down to the rest of the team and we are hoping to begin working on our new curriculum from next month.

Last month, I consulted with staff, parents, the children and current tracking and assessment data to produce a Development Plan for the setting that outlines 4 key areas for development. They are: Quality of the Curriculum, Quality of the Environment, Personal Development and Leadership and Management. Using this, we now have clear goals and targets that we are looking to achieve across the next 6-18 months. This will be reviewed in September and again in January next year. We have big plans for changes to both the environment and the curriculum that will continue to build on Acorns as an outstanding Early Years Setting with the unique child at it's centre.

Despite all of the challenges and hurdles we have faced this year, Acorns continues to move forward in every way possible. We are very fortunate to have an incredible team who face each day with enthusiasm and adapt and embrace changes. I would like to once again extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has helped to navigate this challenging year and offer their support. As someone who was very new to the role when the pandemic hit, it has certainly been a learning curve! But throughout it all I have been heartened by the wonderful Acorns Community that I feel exceptionally proud to be a part of. Thank you.

Election of Trustees

As I'm sure most of you are aware, Acorns is managed by a parent led voluntary committee of trustees - By joining the committee it enables you to take an active role in decision making within the setting to the benefit of your children's time with us. Acorns is run and managed day to day by Sammie & her team, as a management committee we need to now elect a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 9 committee members to vote on any major changes or decisions involving Acorns.

Committee roles: Chair, Treasurer, Secretary & Committee members. Total allowed is 12 and in line with our current constitution no fewer than 60% of elected trustees must be current parents of children attending the setting. All elected committee agree to adhere to our current constitution.

I understand that Mike Ludwig will not be standing for re-election this evening so I would just like to take a moment to thank him for his incredible support, knowledge and his time spent with us as Committee member and then as Treasurer. This last year has been especially challenging and with his help and expertise

we have implemented some major changes to the infrastructure of the setting that I know will make a huge difference going forward into this next year. Mike, thank you...it really has been a pleasure to work with you.

Election of New Committee

All current committee members stood down.

Re-election of new committee members, as follows:

- Chair Person – Kat Carter proposed by Pippa Springer, seconded by Anna Saunders
- Treasurer – Anna Saunders, proposed by Kat Carter seconded by Siobhan Smart
- Secretary – Siobhan Smart, proposed by Kat Carter seconded by Anna Saunders
- Fundraising Chair/Committee – Pippa Springer proposed by Jess Baseley seconded by Siobhan Smart
- Committee – Tom Pegg, proposed by Kat Carter seconded by Anna Saunders
- Committee – Jess Baseley proposed by Anna Saunders seconded by Siobhan Smart

The meeting closed at 20.45

Next Proposed date for AGM – January 2022

Minutes signed off by Chair: _____

Date:_____

HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL

Accounts for the Year ended 31st August 2020

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HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL**Receipts and Payments Account for the Year ended 31 August 2020**

| | 2020 Total Funds £ | 2019 Total Funds £ |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Receipts | | |
| Fees | 82,895 | 102,366 |
| Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme | 6,019 | - |
| Local Authority Grant | 2,500 | - |
| Registration | 210 | 246 |
| Donations | 650 | 460 |
| Fundraising | 4,645 | 3,679 |
| Feed in tariff | 170 | 302 |
| Uniform | 196 | 75 |
| Staff Training Awards | - | 52 |
| Trips & visits | - | 271 |
| EYPP | 302 | 76 |
| Bank interest received | 2 | 2 |
| Total Receipts | 97,589 | 107,529 |
| Payments | | |
| Rent | 2,250 | 1,688 |
| Wages & National Insurance | 77,716 | 87,245 |
| Employee pension contributions | 1,957 | 1,949 |
| Staff / Graduate Training costs | 777 | 533 |
| Subscriptions | 604 | 160 |
| Fundraising Costs | 547 | 928 |
| Office Supplies | 1,241 | 1,025 |
| Toys & Equipment | 1,725 | 1,082 |
| Food & Consumables | 1,922 | 3,529 |
| Uniform | 300 | 194 |
| Electricity & Water | 1,028 | 1,108 |
| Insurance | 1,382 | 1,371 |
| Trips/ Visiting Music | - | 819 |
| Telephone | 865 | 830 |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance | 3,192 | 5,528 |
| Travel | 31 | 2 |
| Total Payments | 95,537 | 107,991 |
| Surplus / (Deficit) for the Year | 2,052 | (462) |
| Bank Balances 1st September 2019 | 10,671 | 11,133 |
| Bank Balances 31st August 2020 | 12,723 | 10,671 |

Approval

I approve the Receipts and Payments Account set out above and the Statement of Assets and notes on page 3 and confirm that all relevant records and information have been made available for their preparation.

M Ludwig : Treasurer
On Behalf of Helmdon Acorns Pre-school

Date:

2020

HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL**Statement of Assets as at 31 August 2020**

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | £ | £ |
| <u>Current Assets</u> | | |
| Deposit Account | 4,013 | 4,011 |
| Current Account | 8,710 | 6,660 |
| | <u>12,723</u> | <u>10,671</u> |
| <u>Represented by:</u> | | |
| Total Funds | <u>12,723</u> | <u>10,671</u> |

Movement in Funds

| | Balance 01.09.19 | Incoming resources | Outgoing resources | Balance 31.08.20 |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund | 10,671 | 97,589 | 95,537 | 12,723 |
| Total Funds | <u>10,671</u> | <u>97,589</u> | <u>95,537</u> | <u>12,723</u> |

Notes to the Accounts**Assets Retained for the Charity's own use**

The Charity occupies a new purpose built building which has been funded by restricted donations. The total costs incurred at 31 August 2016 were £194,098.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Helmdon Acorns Pre-School

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the pre-school for the year ending 31st August 2020, which are set out on pages 2-3.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Pre-School you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (' the act ').

I report in respect of my examination of the Pre-School's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect :

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Pre-School as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Name: Denise Balch
Qualification: A.C.A.
Address: 15 Towcester Rd
Old Stratford
Milton Keynes MK19 6AN
Date: 19th April 2021

HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL

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HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL

Receipts and Payments Account for the Year ended 31 August 2020

| | 2020 Total Funds £ | 2019 Total Funds £ |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Receipts | | |
| Fees | 82,895 | 102,366 |
| Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme | 6,019 | - |
| Local Authority Grant | 2,500 | - |
| Registration | 210 | 246 |
| Donations | 650 | 460 |
| Fundraising | 4,645 | 3,679 |
| Feed in tariff | 170 | 302 |
| Uniform | 196 | 75 |
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| Trips & visits | - | 271 |
| EYPP | 302 | 76 |
| Bank interest received | 2 | 2 |
| Total Receipts | <u>97,589</u> | <u>107,529</u> |
| Payments | | |
| Rent | 2,250 | 1,688 |
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HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL**Statement of Assets as at 31 August 2020**

| | 2020 £ | 2019 £ |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Current Assets</u> | | |
| Deposit Account | 4,013 | 4,011 |
| Current Account | 8,710 | 6,660 |
| | <u>12,723</u> | <u>10,671</u> |
| <u>Represented by:</u> | | |
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| Total Funds | <u>10,671</u> | <u>97,589</u> | <u>95,537</u> | <u>12,723</u> |

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HELMDON ACORNS PRE-SCHOOL

ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST AUGUST 2020

thompson
balch
Chartered Accountants
and Business Advisers



Regulated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants
in England and Wales

t 01908 262646 · enquiries@thompsonbalch.co.uk · www.thompsonbalch.co.uk
Sovereign House, 15 Towcester Road, Old Stratford, Milton Keynes MK19 6AN