



# Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school

## Annual General Meeting 2021

### Manager's Report

Here we are at my first AGM as Manager of Acorn. I would like to start by thanking everyone for making me feel so welcome over the past 6 months. I hope we have managed to carry out the smooth transition that we had hoped for.

#### Summary of the past year

At the start of the academic year - September 2020, we were all mid pandemic with Acorn split into bubbles under the leadership of Mrs Birtles. Although the bubbles greatly reduced the resources available to the children, it was the only way Acorn could reduce the risk of transmission and safeguard against full closure. It was a tough time for everyone; the staffing team were split in two, parents couldn't come into the setting and the children were kept apart.

In April I joined the team for a term long induction, and from May half term we collapsed the bubbles, bringing all of the children and staff back together. We managed to celebrate our leavers in July with a party and graduation and, although we couldn't have the party in the park we originally planned, the children had an amazing time.

#### Where are we now?

Since September 2021 we have welcomed the opportunity to ease many of the coronavirus restrictions, bringing back lots of the activities previously put on hold. The revision of the EYFS has brought about many changes to the statutory framework and learning and development guidance, with a focus on reducing paperwork for staff and also writing our own curriculum. We have started to build our curriculum and it will continue to grow over the coming weeks and months; we have already introduced new Tennis sessions on a Wednesday afternoon and have plans to include learning opportunities such as chick hatching and the butterfly experience. We will provide a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, exploring the children's interests as well as expanding their knowledge and vocabulary through a diverse range of topics.

Coronavirus is still very much a part of life at Acorn; we continually manage the threat of coronavirus on a daily basis within the setting, monitoring for symptoms and ensuring the setting maintains a high standard of cleanliness.

We have welcomed 15 new children so far this term, which is lower than we have seen over previous years. We suspect this is the impact of coronavirus and will need to pay close attention to our finances to make sure Acorn continues to be financially stable.

#### Plans for the coming year

We are hoping to be able to invite Parents in again for our Parents Evening on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November.

Fundraising projects will recommence from this half term with a Bag2school collection planned for 17<sup>th</sup> November, and plans are being made for a Christmas event for the children in December. The staff have volunteered to run an event each term and we are building a team of parent volunteers to run additional projects alongside these.

With funds raised we will continue to develop the garden area, enhancing the sensory garden and freshening up the fences. The kitchen appliances also need replacing and an additional sink fitted for hand washing.

We have new signs being fitted to the front of the building and the foot entrance to the car park. This will help increase Acorn's kerb appeal and help us stand out to the local community. We will then carry out some marketing in the local area to raise Acorn's profile and increase our occupancy.

#### Conclusion

I would like to take this opportunity to say Thank you to the whole of the staff team for everything they have done for Acorn over the past year: Amanda, Linda, Delia, Karen, Angela, Abbie, Sonia, Lisa, Roxanne and Chloe.

Amanda, our previous manager, retired at the end of last term and we wish her a very happy retirement.

Thank you to our trustees for all of their support, for donating their time and also giving me the opportunity to be a part of Acorn.

Last but not least, I would like to say Thank You to all of the Parents and Carers who have been so understanding about the changes in procedures due to covid, including the many times we have had to call and request a PCR test be taken.



## **Treasurer Annual Report 2020-2021**

**Provided by Chris Clements and Delia Alves**

### **November 2021**

#### **Financial Summary for 2020-2021**

Acorn started the academic year with most of our non-reception aged children moving into our pre-school/full days sessions, in addition to welcoming new children and their families to the setting. Acorn did, however, face deficits to our expected income and expenditure for the Autumn term 2020 impacted by the loss of several new starters and reductions in previously requested sessional hours due to change in financial circumstances. Our overall number of sessional hours being accessed were less than in previous years although they returned to normal by the summer term 2021.

Hertfordshire County Council offered all early years providers the ability to match the funding they received in the summer term 2021 for the Autumn term 2021, to reduce the financial impact of the pandemic. This allowance contributed to a slight increase in total childcare income received during the 2020/21 financial year.

September 2020 also began with the re-opening of Acorn to all our children. Following government Covid-19 guidance and a thorough review of our risk assessment policy, Acorn was split into two bubbles – one for our 2–3-year-old children and the other for our 3–4-year-old children. The split carried a large financial cost as both bubbles had to be suitably staffed; maintained; fully equipped and resourced to ensure all areas of the children's learning development were being effectively accommodated. Acorn were, in effect, running two settings within the one building. We also had to re-design our external area to ensure the safe social distancing of parents, children and staff during busy times.

Staffing costs increased significantly in comparison to the previous year. This was due to several factors: - the reduction in furlough payments received; additional manager salaries to ensure the smooth transition from Amanda Birtles to Alison Whelan; staff salary increases; the employment of a former student; National Living Wage increases and pension increases. All these factors had been accounted for and financial planning had been carried out previously to ensure our reserves were sufficient to cover the additional outlay.

Acorn invested heavily in the outdoor area – resurfacing the once muddy and often unusable grass hill, sensory garden, the purchase of large pieces of outdoor play equipment and new wet suits for each child to promote the use of the outdoor space. This had always been a long-term goal and thanks to careful financial planning in the previous year we were finally able to bring the plans to fruition.

We have included a summary of Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school's finances over the last financial year (30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021), and those from the 2019/20 financial year for comparison.

	2019/2020 £	2020/2021 £
<b>INCOMINGS</b>		
Fees (Hertfordshire County; Invoice; lunch club; reg fees)	158,282.96	159,834.35
Fundraising	3,328.02	3,645.05
Other (Petty Cash; Misc) *2019/20 includes uniform profit	*871.06	2,590.00
Interest	48.72	0
Total	162,530.76	166,069.40
<b>OUTGOINGS</b>		
Wages; NI; Tax; Staff pension	(104,877.73)	(131,480.22)
Rent and Insurance	(1,974.50)	(2,326.35)
Utilities	(6,318.41)	(5,118.67)
Building and Garden	(3,953.99)	(8,717.97)
Uniform and Book bags	(358.10)	(133.35)
Petty Cash	(343.85)	
Snack and Household	(1,341.70)	(1,741.38)
Equipment; Stationary and Craft	(7,378.02)	(10,870.50)
Professional Fees and Memberships; Staff Training	(4,013.74)	(3,417.14)
Advertising	(130.00)	(105.00)
Banking fees	(75.86)	(122.40)
Other	(0)	(1,440.25)
Total	(130,765.90)	(165,388.23)
<b>ANNUAL PROFIT/(LOSS)</b>	<b>31,764.86</b>	<b>596.17</b>

Although Acorn returned a small profit last year, we needing to ensure that our costings for at least the next year are tightly managed. We have again seen a reduction on the number of sessional hours being accessed, however, this is continuing to steadily increase week on week. The end of the government's furlough scheme may also see another increase in staffing costs this financial year, but we will continue to closely monitor our outgoings and expenditure.

As a charity, we do not aim to end each financial year with large amounts of profit and instead, prefer to spend our funds on improving the setting and ensuring the children enjoy the best learning experiences through quality teaching and resources.

We want to thank the Acorn team, for their efforts in not only continuing to keep Acorn operating during an exceptionally difficult time but for effectively managing our outgoings and keeping costs down. Thank you to our fantastic team of trustees for striving on with their fundraising efforts even in the face of a national pandemic where social events and interactions were simply not possible. We are extremely grateful for the hard work of all of the Acorn team.

In addition, we would like to say a huge thank-you to Keith Jones, Acorn's accountant, for his invaluable assistance during this time.

#### **Finances 20201-2022:**

For 2021/22 we must continue to strive to run cost effectively:

- Further our reserve funds for a potential year of increased staffing costs and utility hikes.
- Continuing our financial obligation as employers, redundancy contingency fund and pension contributions.

Does anyone have any questions?.



## **Minutes of Special General Meeting (SGM)**

### **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021, 7:30pm via Zoom**

**Attendees:** Linda McLellan (Deputy, Acorn), Emma Clack (Secretary), Annie Swan (Trustee), Kayleigh Petts (Parent), Amanda Birtles, Roxanne Speede (Staff member, Acorn)

**Apologies:** Chris Clements (Treasurer), Claire O'Connell (Chair), Delia Alves (Staff member, Acorn)

#### **Welcome**

Emma Clack opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the SGM and reminding all present that the SGM was called at the AGM on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021, when all present agreed to carry over agenda item 7 (nomination of Trustees) to a SGM in light of changes taking place at the setting

#### **Nomination of Trustees**

All current Trustees stepped down from their role as per the Constitution.

Emma asked if there were any nominations for the role of Chairperson. Annie Fitt confirmed that she would take on this post with immediate effect. Annie was nominated by Linda McLellan and seconded by Emma Clack.

Emma asked if there were any nominations for the role of Secretary and expressed an interest in the role. Emma was nominated by Roxanne Speede and seconded Kayleigh Petts.

Emma asked if there were any nominations for Treasurer and confirmed that in his absence, Chris Clements had declared he would like to be nominated for the role. Annie Fitt nominated Chris for the role and Linda McLellan seconded this.

Emma asked if there were any nominations for the role of General Trustee – Amanda Birtles and Kayleigh Petts expressed interest. Amanda was nominated by Kayleigh and seconded by Annie. Kayleigh was nominated by Emma and seconded by Roxanne Speede.

#### **Confirmation of Trustees**

The Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school Trustees from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 until the AGM in Autumn Term 2022, are therefore confirmed as:

Chair – Annie Swan  
Secretary – Emma Clack  
Treasurer – Chris Clements  
General Trustee – Amanda Rutherford-Birtles  
General Trustee – Kayleigh Petts

The Trustees would like to thank Claire O'Connell for her work as Chairperson for the past two years.

**Meeting closed at 7:45pm**