



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2023/24

Friday 9th February 2024, 9:15am at Acorn

Attendees: Annie Fitt (Chair), Emma Clack (Secretary), Connor Tobin (Visitor), Roxanne Speede (Manager), Delia Alves (Deputy Manager), Sacha Glasgow-Smith (Parent), Michael Clarke (Parent), Sue Clements (Parent), Jess Baldwin (Parent).

Apologies: Chris Clements (Treasurer), Kayleigh Petts (Trustee), Alexis Bond (Parent), Jana Peake (Parent), Georgia Birch (Visitor).

1. Welcome

Emma Clack welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked them for coming.

2. Apologies for Absence

Noted above.

3. Minutes from 2022-3 AGM

The minutes from last year were distributed via email to all parents and staff on 4th February 2023 with no queries raised, therefore the minutes are confirmed as read and agreed. A copy of the minutes were made available at the meeting for anyone to read.

4. Manager's Report – Roxanne Speede

Here we are at my first AGM as Manager of Acorn. I would like to start by thanking everyone for your support over the last two months.

Where are we now?

There was a revision of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) on the 4th January 2024 which has brought about changes to the statutory framework and learning and development guidance. We have adapted our practice to meet the new requirements and will continue to develop this further.

Improvements made:

- Entire classroom and toilets were freshly painted in December
- a re-arrangement of the classroom to offer specific areas relating to the EYFS, ensuring children can engage with and access all areas
- Introduced a voting station in line with our British Values policy
- Created a writing area to assist with our literacy learning goals
- Installed a new projector system to assist with the teaching of termly topics, maths and phonics
- Maths and literacy school workbooks have been introduced for each child for 1-2-1 and group work sessions
- All interior notice boards have been updated to fit in with our curriculum and learning goals
- Installed a new baby changing unit

- Re- introduced our golden goals for children begin to learn vital life skills that they can build upon at an age-appropriate pace.
- Introduced a junk modelling station to enhance the children's expressive arts and design.

Setting

We have made lots of changes and updates to the interior of the setting ensuring an enabling environment where all areas of the EYFS are constantly accessible to our children. We have focused heavily on offering a continuous provision, providing consistency to our learning areas and reducing the need to update and adapt each individual area.

Curriculum

We have started to build our curriculum and it will continue to grow over the coming weeks and months and 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.

I have begun to introduce a core curriculum which is implemented and used year on year. This reduces the need for additional resources to be purchased, reduces planning time, identifies where activities can be made less or more challenging and enables us as a team to review termly which parts of our curriculum have achieved the desired learning goals and which areas need amending or removing.

The foundation of the curriculum will be based upon core topics relevant to each term and categorised half termly. Topic areas will be amended to tie in with the curriculum as and when required and changed in line with our current topics or if we feel that they are not producing the desired learning outcomes.

Plans for the coming year – focus on outside area ready for Spring/Summer:

- Working party to be arranged on a weekend and opened up to parents and carers
- House at the top of the hill will become a book shed where children and key workers can access a variety of books. This can be adult, or child led.
- Bug hotel made from pallets to be installed in the sensory garden
- Planting area input in the sensory garden where a variety of herbs and aromatic plants will be grown.
- As the sand pit has not been covered, this will need to be emptied and re-filled ready for the summer term. We are currently looking at quotes to make a hard plastic cover to reduce the cost of emptying each year.
- New Acorn sign to be installed at the front of the Acorn building. Quotations currently being sourced.

Conclusion

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the whole of the Acorn team for everything they have done and continue to do for Acorn: Sonia, Tara, Lisa, Delia and Linda.

I would like to say thank you to all of our Parents and Carers who are always so supportive of our pre-school. We are very lucky to have you.

Last but not least, I would like to say a very special thank you to our trustees for all of the support and dedication they have given Acorn over the years. They have worked tirelessly for Acorn and we are extremely grateful for everything they have done for us. We will miss you tremendously.

5. Chair's Report – Annie Fitt

We've sadly come to the end of my term as Chair, and it's been another great year at Acorn.

Another cohort of children have started the next stage in their education at Primary school and we had another successful year with 25 new children joining us throughout the academic year in addition to our existing children, who we were very happy to welcome back after the summer holidays.

Roxanne has already covered information about the setting for the past year, so I would just like to talk more generally about Acorn. We are continuing to build Acorn's place as a coveted pre-school in Welwyn and have continued to feed several schools in the local area, with our largest numbers going to Welwyn St Mary's and Oaklands. We've had positive comments about our pre-schoolers from last year settling into big school and those of us with children further into their primary school years can see the benefits the start at Acorn provided! We also have one eye to the future, as always, and the need to continue to strengthen Acorn as a "business", with solid marketing and administrative activities and actions.

Which leads me on to Fundraising.... You are probably all very aware that as a charity, Acorn is reliant on everyone's help, support and contributions, so whether it's taking part in our active fundraiser, making cakes, donating prizes or just volunteering a few hours at an event, every little helps. Thank you on behalf of the children, trustees and teachers at Acorn.

Chris will provide more details in the Treasurers report, including details of our final fundraising figure for 2022/23. This year we have held various fundraisers involving both the parents and the children, including our scavenger hunt; active fundraising challenge; children's Christmas party; children's tombola stall and the Welwyn Street market and ended the year with a summer party (that was not very sunny) organised by several of our parents. We're always looking for new ideas for fundraising, so if you have any suggestions, please let us know!

On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to say thank you to the following for their help with the fundraising events this year (apologies if I have missed anyone):

- Jess Baldwin for her never-ending help organising; rallying; promoting and selling. She has been an absolute asset to our fundraising efforts.
- Everyone who has helped or just attended an event, spread the word about events, and just helped us along the way. Clare; Jack; Iann; Kim; Amy; Becca; Charlotte; Jonathan; Julie; Katie; Laura; Liz; Marianne; Richard and Robert. And, of course, the staff and trustees.

Staff

Last year saw several changes at Acorn with the departure of several members of our team - Angela Lumsdon; Karen Redmond and Linda McLellan (although we are overjoyed that Mrs McLellan has returned to re-claim her position of Senior Practitioner and SENCo) and the return of Amanda Birtles as interim manager.

I would like to formally thank them on behalf of everyone at Acorn, past and present, for their years of service, hard work and commitment to Acorn.

We are extremely fortunate to have had an equally wonderful new manager step into the role over the past few months. Huge congratulations to Roxanne Speede on her new role – I (and all the Trustees) know you will continue to move Acorn forward knowing it is safe in your very capable hands. Your enthusiasm, nurturing nature and clear vision will carry you through this period of change, and lead Acorn into an exciting new future.

And so to the practitioners! Including our not-so-new practitioner, Tara White, who joined over a year ago, and has settled brilliantly into the team. All the staff are wonderful - looking after the children day in and out, planning sessions with care, and working continually and with seemingly endless energy and enthusiasm. They constantly look to improve and develop the setting, create imaginative session plans, and to stay up-to-date with changes to the Early Years provision. The trustees and I would like to thank Roxanne and the team for their continuing hard work, commitment and dedication to Acorn. To all of you – Roxanne, Delia, Sonia; Lisa, Tara and Linda, you all really make Acorn the wonderful place it is, so thank you.

Accounts

Chris Clements will be providing a detailed report on finances as Treasurer, but we have continued to grow the finances in the right direction over the past year, with careful management and considered reinvestment. This year has seen the large expenditure of purchasing a new roof. We have spent more this year, but with care and consideration.

We need to look at ongoing maintenance, and continually developing Acorn, whilst ensuring the finances are managed safely and with consideration of future needs and security. We are looking at improving the appearance at the front of the building and developing our sensory area and removing the existing two sheds and installing a large, insulated and lit shed to safely store our resources. None of this would be possible without the team's careful management.

On behalf of the Trustees & Staff at Acorn I would like to say a huge thanks to our Bookkeeper / Payroll Manager / Accountant – Keith Jones. Keith provides help & support in maintaining our records, submitting returns and ensuring that the teachers are paid correctly and every year we thank him for his work. We are always hugely grateful and it's been a pleasure to work with him while I've been Chair, thank you Keith.

And so to the Trustees...

Many of you will know that the Trustees are the team who help run Acorn. Everything is done on a voluntary basis, so there's usually a certain amount of juggling family, work and other commitments whilst doing all that's possible for Acorn. I would like to thank the team this year – it's been great working with you all.

And so to Chris for his report, before we go to election of the new Trustees. To summarise my part, whilst it was another year of change, it's been another Outstanding one for Acorn! Thank you to everyone who has continued or started to support us over 2022 -2023 – whilst the staff and the trustees work incredibly hard, we couldn't do it without your support, or without your children. Thank you all.

6. Treasurer's Report – Chris Clements and Delia Alves

Financial Summary for 2022-2023

Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school started the academic year retaining the majority of our non-reception aged children who moved into our afternoon pre-school and/or full days sessions, in addition to welcoming new children and their families to the setting.

Our overall number of sessional hours being accessed were more than the previous year and the average number of hours being attended remained at a higher level than 2021-2022 for the duration of the year, resulting in a substantial increase in income for both invoiced and funded sessional fees.

In September 2022, following the stepping down of our interim manager into their previous role, Acorn recruited a temporary agency manager to cover the position until November 2022 and in the Autumn term 2022, one of our members of staff undertook redundancy. In addition, staffing costs increased in comparison to

the previous year due to staff salary/hour increases; National Living Wage increases and pension increases. These factors all contributed to higher annual staffing costs.

Outgoings which Acorn were able to reduce were monitored with strict budgets to ensure our deficit figure would be as low as possible whilst still maintaining high levels of staffing and standards of learning and developmental opportunities for our children. Our utility outgoings doubled, and our household costings increased despite the introduction of children providing their own snacks, following the increase in inflation and the nationwide cost of living crisis.

Fundraising monies were increased from the previous financial year, with the successful operation of several events and campaigns.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

We have included a summary of Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school's finances over the last financial year (1st September 2022 – 31st August 2023), and those from the 2021/22 financial year for comparison.

	2021/2022	2022/2023
INCOMINGS	£	£
Fees (Hertfordshire County; Invoice; lunch club; reg fees)	140,875.11	161,251.19
Fundraising	3,519.66	4,929.11
Other (Petty Cash; Misc)	935.00	0
Interest	0	0
Total	145,329.77	166,180.30
OUTGOINGS		
Wages; NI; Tax; Staff pension	(138,457.82)	(142,618.31)
Rent and Insurance	(3,089.91)	(3,335.57)
Utilities	(3,305.30)	(6,333.61)
Building and Garden	(3,442.61)	(5982.07)
Uniform and Book bags	(664.60)	161.24
Snack and Household	(1,855.59)	(2789.61)
Equipment; Stationary and Craft	(4,853.48)	(3933.88)
Professional Fees and Memberships; Staff Training	(2,999.11)	(4,312.35)
Advertising	(105.00)	(265.00)
Banking fees	(117.03)	(137.09)
Other	(335.40)	(9.50)
Total	(159,225.75)	(169,555.75)
ANNUAL PROFIT/(LOSS)	(13,895.88)	(3,375.45)

We wish to thank the Acorn Trustee and staffing team, for their efforts in managing our outgoings and keeping costs as low as possible in addition to their fundraising efforts. Thank you to all of our families who have helped organise; attended and supported the years events.

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 2023-2024:

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.

Although Acorn returned a loss last year, reduced vastly from the previous year despite the additional staffing costs and general household increases, we are hopeful that with the continued close monitoring of our outgoings and expenditure, our financial position will be positive for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Due to the departure of two of our long-standing members of staff in the Spring and Summer terms, the Trustees agreed that we would operate at 70% capacity for the 2023-2024 academic year to accommodate the reduction in our staffing team. This will be reviewed throughout the year and amended if required.

We have agreed to offer funded places to families accessing the new working parent childcare initiatives and believe that this will lead to our younger children accessing more sessions with us. We do, however, need to remain stringent due to the national rise in utility and general household costings and expected staff cost increases.

For 2023/24 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.

7. Election of Trustees

All existing Trustees stepped down from their positions and attendees were invited to put themselves forward if they wanted to become a Trustee and be nominated in during the meeting. Some people who could not be in attendance at the meeting had given permission for them to be voted in in their absence. A vote took place, the outcome of which was:

Connor Tobin – proposed to be elected as Chair

Supported by Emma Clack

Seconded by Annie Swann

Sacha Glasgow-Smith – proposed to be elected as Treasurer

Supported by Delia Alves

Seconded by Jess Baldwin

Georgia Birch – proposed to be elected as Secretary (in absence)

Supported by Sue Clements

Seconded by Michael Clarke

Michael Clarke – proposed to be elected as Trustee

Supported by Connor Tobin

Seconded by Roxanne Speede

Jana Peake – proposed to be elected as Trustee

Supported by Delia Alves

Seconded by Connor Tobin

Connor, Sacha and Michael gave a brief introduction to themselves and why they have become Trustees at Acorn.

8. AOB

It was proposed that Acorn would create a 'wishlist' of toys/books/garden equipment that the setting would like/need and this could be shared with parents. It would be helpful to understand what items are needed at which time.

Fundraising was discussed and Emma and Annie thanked Jess Baldwin for her efforts with the Active Acorns and other fundraising activities over the past few years. Roxanne and Delia spoke of planned fundraising activities such as craft mornings. A fundraising team needs to be set up as a separate body to the Trustees.

Meeting finished at 10am



ACORN PLAYGROUP AND PRE-SCHOOL FINANCIAL SUMMARY

September 2022 – August 2023

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Treasurer Annual Report 2022-2023

Provided by Chris Clements and Delia Alves

February 2024

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