

St Bernadette's Playgroup Committee Meeting February 2022

Chairperson Marie Coyle welcomed all present to the 2022 AGM

On behalf of staff and the playgroup committee a report both from February and April

Report ;

St Bernadette's Playgroup first opened its doors in 1992 working from a porta cabin which really was not fit for purpose.

The committee at the time with help and support from community leaders highlighted the need for a purpose built building, with funding from the National Lottery, the purpose built building opened in 1992.

The change it made to the children and parents of this community was unbelievable this also provided a much needed outdoor play area, office and training space for parents.

Over the years we have had three generations of families attending the playgroup, its hearting to now see past pupils bring their own children through our doors.

We provided two sessions' morning and afternoon and employed six members of staff; the service also ran effectually with the support and dedication of the voluntary management committee.

Courses, training, social events and networking events were provided for parent and locals from the local and wider community, the building was used to its full potential.

Due to the drop in birth-rate we had no choice but to drop down to a morning session and sadly loose three members of staff.

A year or two prior to covid, with staff retiring to due health and family commitments the committee ran into difficulty to find qualified staff with experience to fill the gaps.

Thanks to the support of Social Services who kindly let us run with two members of staff for a limited period until we were successful in employing an additional staff member to meet the quota as laid down in the guidelines.

The post was advertised twice over a period of six weeks but unfortunately this was not to be.

With no option left we had to rely on a former member of staff to return and fill the gap until the post was re-advertised, this helped short term, but we needed permeant staff in order to meet guidelines.

Third time lucky we employed, the post was filled for several months but the candidate did not meet the requirements to deliver the service required , we were once again back to the drawing board.

Social Services again extended our time to re-advertise the post. Again this was fan for a further three weeks but unsuccessful.

With no light at the end of the tunnel, staff and committee met in February to discuss the very worrying situation we were facing. We were all in agreement, with heavy hearts of course that finding suitable candidate to fill the post of deputy leader and if the former member of staff could no longer stand in and cover the post for assistant then it was enviable we could no longer run with two members of staff.

That we could not provide the quality service expected of Social Services and the Education Board we discussed this in length and all present realised we had no option left but to go back to social services ask for another few months extension and come June we would have to close the doors of the playgroup.

A discussion took place around the plan we would have to put in place between now and June, to ensure that there was a clear way forward and that everything that needed to be done in relation to the closure of the playgroup to the handover of assets were set out in line with regulations and our constitution. These included,

- Inform social services / education board

- Meet with parents to inform them of closing date

- Staff redundancy

- Suitable group / groups as in line with constitution

- Meet with accountant to discuss final accounts

- Inform charity commission

These tasks were divided up among the committee members in order to ensure that any decision made, were done so with the understanding and agreement of the full committee.

The committee agreed that a clear stipulation be put in place to ensure that any organisation who may use the building going forward or take it over interlay must,

- Maintain the building to the high standard that it has been kept over the years

- All equipment, fixtures and recourses must be maintained to a high standard

- All remaining finances must be used for either the maintenance and up-keep of the building / or to provide services in line with the constriction

