



The Lenches Pre-School, Church Lench Village Hall,
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2024 AGM Meeting Minutes

Document	Minutes of Committee meeting
Location	Church Lench Village Hall
Date	25 th November 2024
Time	19.30
Attendees	Millie Benbow (MB), Natasha Owen (NO), Paula Challacombe (PC), Natalie Waters (NW), Nicola Coote (NC), Lisa Randall (LR), Sarah Bufton (SB), Charlotte Robinson (CR), Jessica Tomkinson (JT), Laura Phipps (LP), Tanya Henry (TH), Jo Beasley (JB), Keri Ford (KF), Celia Hall (CH)
Apologies	Nichola Masters, Stephanie Higham-Lloyd
Minute taker	Natalie Waters

1. Welcome and introduction

- MB welcomes everyone to the AGM

2. Apologies

Nicky Masters
Steph Higham-Lloyd

3. [Minutes from 2023 AGM](#)

Distributed on an email prior to today and hard copies offered to members

4. Matters arising from last year's AGM minutes

MB goes through the following:

- Query re distribution of previous years AGM minutes not being available to all members, so this year we have ensured all members received a copy.
- From Treasurers report. AP will request a Charity Commission audit after receiving concerns from incoming members over finances. It was raised at the time that a request for an audit will likely not happen as we are so small we were unlikely to be audited. It is not known whether or not an audit was requested but we haven't heard anything.
- ST queried where were all the receipts going? MB explains the previous committee were able to provide an answer to this and nothing in the minutes

state otherwise. Numerous requests over a period of time were made of previous committee Chairperson to provide receipts but they never materialised.

- CH queried why the VH rent was lower this year compared to previous year – MB explains that the final payment for the VH had not been made and has been made in this year's accounting period. Which Nikki will touch on in her report.
- Account reporting was not signed off and it was suggested that it is sent back to the accountant to be reviewed. This was done and previous Treasurer Liz Ferguson worked with the accountants to prepare the necessary accounting documents. These were signed off later in the academic year and an EGM

5. Acceptance of last year's AGM minutes

MB asks members if they accept last years minutes, members agree and minutes signed off by MB

6. Agree to adopt the latest constitution - [Pre-school learning alliance constitution 2011](#)

All agreed to adopt the new constitution 3

7. Agree and adopt reviewed policies

- [Safeguarding](#) policy
- [Whistleblowing](#) policy
- [Staff conduct](#) policy
- [SEND](#) policy
- [Promoting Positive Behaviour](#) Policy

All have been updated and are available on our website is everyone happy to adopt these policies?

All agreed to adopted theses polices and to be viewed on the website.

8. Chairperson's report

- Update on progress and achievements
(see attached chairperson report) – all attendees have agreed and no questions have been raised in regards to this report.

9. Treasurer's report and [presentation of accounts](#)

- Acceptance of accounts – MB asks members to accept and sign off this document, and recommends that we do, they have been independently examined.
Please see treasure report attached – all attendees are happy and accounts are signed off.

10. Manager's report

Interest within the setting is picking up. We are not going to fill the preschool with large numbers. We will take small numbers to keep a close family feel and knowing each child in depth. Ethos -if you believe, you will achieve – giving each child, promoting independence, make them happy and confident to help and have that chance with an adult and other children. Everything in our practice we are learning. To promote happy children who are resilience in them. Unique setting – field, orchard, school, pond area, hall and garden. Cultural capital is lead at preschool. Paula and the team create a rich curriculum. Happy staff creates happy children and

families. Trial and error within the setting and this will carry on throughout our preschool. We will enhance the children's opportunities.

- Natalie – Deputy & DSL
- Tash – Sendco and training to level 3 SENCO training.
- Cristina – Apprenticeship level 2.

Our lead is EYFS - is legal document we must follow under the statutory department of education.

11. Election of Affiliate members

- JB – As doesn't have child at the setting. But as a TA of church Lench school – MB nominated JB and LP 2nded

12. AOB

None

13. Resignation of current committee

- Millie Benbow
- Nikki Coote
- Natalie Waters
- Nicky Masters
- Stephanie Higham-Lloyd
- Keri Ford

14. Nominations and election of new committee members

- Millie Benbow – NC nominated – PC 2nded
- Nikki Coote - SB nominated – NW 2nded
- Tanya Henry – MB Nominated – NW 2nded
- Laura Phipps – MB nominated – NW 2nded
- Keri Ford MB – Nominated JB 2nded
- Charlotte Robinson – MB -Nominated – NC 2nded
- Jo Beasley – KF Nominated NW 2nded
 - Jess Tomkinson NC Nominated NW 2nded
 - Lisa Randall – NW Nominated – LP 2nded
 - Sarah Buffton - NW Nominated – LR 2nded
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15. First meeting of new committee

- To establish Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary roles
- MB -chair NC 2nded
- NC – treasurer MB 2nded
- TH – secretary NC 2nded
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Meeting closed 8:30

Chairpersons Report

This past year has been one of growth, learning and resilience for our Pre-school. Despite significant challenges posed by funding and staff shortages, rising costs and low child numbers our dedicated staff, supportive parents and enthusiastic children have made an absolute success of what this time last year seemed an impossible task.

A new committee was elected at last year's AGM in October 2023. It was established at this meeting that the Charity Annual accounts and Trustee Annual Report had not been completed or submitted for neither Year End 2021 or 2022. While YE/23 accounts were presented at the AGM, they were not approved by its members as they were incomplete and unreliable.

Nikki will explain in more detail in her treasurer's report but essentially Pre-school had suffered significant financial losses over the last 3 years and was operating at a loss. We realised if Pre-school continued to operate at the rate of loss at the time it was likely it would be forced to close at end of the year.

However...

The new committee agreed on and implemented the following to attract new families and support/improve the setting and facilities it had to offer.

Fortnightly **Forest school** sessions with external Forest School leader Emma from Freedom Forest School proving popular with both children and staff.

Funics sessions each Wednesday morning delivered in the Summer Term by 20 years + experienced Early Years Teacher Rachel Hartless. Supporting, developing and preparing children for 'school readiness' predominantly those moving on to school in September this year, and helping develop all 3 prime areas of EYFS:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal social and emotional development.

Curiosity Corner – Using a community grant awarded in the early part of the year and having been given permission to use a small piece of agricultural land adjacent to where we operate, TLPS established their own much loved outdoor learning facility. Items were purchased from a recently closed outdoor education facility called Muddy Monsters. With Mud Kitchens, water play, tyres, mark making, balancing, climbing and much more now on offer to children attending TLPS and all whilst being outside supporting children's emotional wellbeing.

An update for CC – After Wychavon Council received a complaint about the use of the land for CC we established that we may need to apply for planning permission to continue to use it. A fundraising appeal went out on social media and sufficient funds were raised from our supportive community members to be apply for planning permission if necessary.

Since then, plans have been made to ring fence these funds from our finances. Ring fencing the funds will enable us to be ready to file a change of use planning application promptly should the Council initiate enforcement action, which they may do at any time.

All those who kindly donated and have given permissions to be contacted have been updated and given the option to have their donation returned. We have had no requests to return any donations.

Pre-school invited local community member Jenny to regularly read to the children. Supporting the wider community links and intergenerational relationships with us, the children have loved having her and Jenny has completely embraced the opportunity and I believe is now offering her baking skills to the children?!

During the year we also had a visit from Santa, held an Easter disco fundraiser, a Community Egg rolling competition and the children have enjoyed a trip to all things wild.

Links with School

We also improved links with school, supporting children's transitions to school. Attending school assembly's and each Friday morning those moving on to school in September enjoyed going over to read a story, activities in the hall and playing on the outdoor play equipment. Children enjoyed having regular visits, church services and even sports day!

All contributing to building a positive relationship with CLFS school. A huge thank you to the Head Teacher Mrs Price and her team for their support and encouragement over the last 12 months.

During the summer term we saw some staff changes. We welcomed new manager Paula Challacombe who brought a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to the role and has been fundamental to the setting and this year's achievements. Paula has been with us for around 6 months and has achieved so much in such a short time.

We welcomed new staff members Natasha Owen and Natalie Waters both bringing experience and strong safeguarding and SEND knowledge to support and compliment Paula ensuring the children flourish.

We saw 7 children leave for school in July. 6 went to Church Lench First School. Natasha Owen worked with the school to support those children going to school and their transitions. Reception year teacher has since reported the children arriving at school this year are much more independent and school ready.

During the summer holidays we introduced Holiday Club for 1 week to support working families. It was a success and all the children enjoyed their time picking blackberries, going for walks around the village, curiosity corner and much more.

Due to its success Holiday Club is something we will be offering for some of the half term breaks going forward into 2024/25 year.

At the start of September 2023 we had 9 children on role.

At the End of Aug 2024 we had 25 children on role.

7 children started school in September 2024.

In relation to our **committee**, we welcomed 7 Committee Members at the beginning of the year, there were a couple of resignations throughout the year, namely Liz Ferguson, Laura Phipps and Amy Sinclair. In March we held an EGM where the annual accounts and trustee reports were presented and approved and later uploaded to the Charity Commission website meaning our legal obligations as a charity had been rectified and updated. Thank you to Liz for retrospectively going through 3 year's of accounting in 4 months and rectifying Pre-school finance history.

Before the accounts had been rectified, we had been turned down for a grant application due to not for filling our charity obligations. A huge achievement and milestone for us.

At this meeting we also welcomed 2 new committee members Natalie Waters and Keri Ford. Nikki Coote took on the role of Treasurer and Natalie the role of Secretary.

Pre-school today and future plans

- Pre-school started this year with 18 children on role proving the initiatives set out above made a positive impact on the lives of the children and their families as the numbers have increased.
- As we begin a new financial year, we continue to offer holiday club and have introduced wraparound care, supporting working families beyond normal operating hours and throughout the year. This has resulted in new families coming and existing families increasing their hours and in turn, offering a more consistent provision for the children. Parents have put their trust in us, some taking their children out of other settings to come to us.
- We have increased Forest School sessions to twice weekly and Funicus sessions continue to run every week enhancing our now rich curriculum and supporting Pre-school children in preparing them for school.
- We have reintroduced lunches provided by MiQuil catering who also supply the school, much loved by the parents!
- We have more plans together with School, such as using bikes in their playground a Christmas lunch and have received a further small grant to improve the pond area at the school into a provision focussing on children's emotional wellbeing. We are hoping to start this in the new year.
- We are receiving recommendations from Early Years professionals and show arounds are weekly and most are being converted into bookings. Professionals like Early Years Improvement teams and S&L are commenting and supporting our social

media posts. One of the Early Years improvement teams has booked a meeting with our team to 'pick their brains'!

Thanks VH for not increasing their rates for this last year again and for bearing with us as we sort out the cupboard, the shed and the attic!

Thank you to Suzanne who has been an absolute rock of support and encouragement and has recently become bank staff and although not qualified is an absolute natural with the children and having her in to help and support the team really is appreciated.

Thank you to **Nikki** who has stepped into the role of Treasurer last March and has worked hard keeping our financial records up to date and has worked on establishing a funding system that stabilises Pre-school's finances for this year.

Thank you to other **committee members and parents** who have supported, encouraged, mopped floors, packed away, played with children, contributed to and embraced the changes.

Paula Firstly, thank you for everything you have achieved for the Pre-school so far, it really is a wonderful provision that I am extremely proud of and I hope you are too. You have also been instrumental in establishing our funding system to be able to sustain the extra-curricular activities that keep the families coming and you have embraced and managed these changes effortlessly.

In your short time with us, your commitment and genuine love for what you do and can-do attitude towards improving what we have to offer families has been a key driver in making our Pre-school the thriving, outdoor focussed sustainable provision it is today.

I believe watching your kind, patient, deep understanding of children has made me better parent. Thank you.

Between us all, we have built a thriving early years provision that everyone is talking about. We have come from on the verge of closure and I am incredibly proud of what we have and I hope you ALL are too!

Treasurer's Report

Hi All, Im Nikki Coote the Treasurer and I will take you on a brief tour of last years finances. As Millie has mentioned the current committee took the pre school on, the back of financial losses over the last 3 years:

£-26,400 Y/E 2021

£-4,300 Y/E 2022

£-18,500 Y/E 2023

I'm pleased to say that we have bought the pre school into profit albeit a small one. So, what did we do to get into this position:

Liz Ferguson initially took on the Treasurers role until March this year and undertook a deep dive into the pre schools finances, this enabled us to get the books into a better place. A massive thanks goes to Liz as she got us into a position where we understood our baseline and we built from there.

To help gain profitability we:

- 1) Saw it necessary to increase parent fees
- 2) Sought grants where possible and utilised the existing PinVin grant to enhance provision.
- 3) We initiated small fundraising efforts such as Cake sale, Easter disco, egg rolling
- 4) Cut costs where possible although very little to cut – A monthly cap on consumables
- 5) Spent money on Marketing – Banners, re vamped the website and enhanced our social media presence
- 6) Covering leavers hours with committee volunteers (A big thanks to Millie for pretty much being in the pre school full time in the last 8 weeks of term).
- 7) A big thank you to the CLVH committee for supporting us with rent freezes over the past year this has been a big help to get us where we are today.
- 8) We also opened an additional restricted reserve account, providing more favourable interest rates.

Returning to profitability was not without its challenges, we accrued c.£4k in costs associated to previous years. This included unpaid rent from previous year, HMRC bill, training costs and pay for an ex employee (which was found in Financial reconciliation in April). Staff turn over hit us financially too, which meant that we paid out unplanned money in the form of accrued holiday pay. Withstanding all of this, we have spent money to vitally enhance the provision offered to children; renewing bedding, breakfast club equipment and installing the gate in Curiosity corner. We also took the children to All Things Wild, some of this was subsidised by the pre-school.

Outlook

Paula has been a big factor in the enhancement of provision and helping the pre school with income. She has helped us with getting the best out of our funding from the council; as well as establishing a funding system to help sustain fantastic experiences for our children such as Forest school, Funicus, curiosity corner, breakfast club and introduction of wraparound care and holiday club. Child numbers are increasing which is great to see.

There will be challenges, the government budget will mean we will have to pay employer NI contributions, where we have been under the threshold previously. Village hall will be lifting the rate freeze and increasing hourly rates, all of this will affect our bottom line. Whilst numbers of children are increasing, we will need to balance this with staff – we are looking to employ another member of staff to support the team and ensure that we have coverage with any staff absence. We are also exploring the option of moving after school club to school to reduce costs and to enable better links with the school.

Outlook is promising but we can't be complacent.

TREASURER'S REPORT

For Annual General Meeting on 25th November 2024

Academic / Financial Year ended 31st August 2024

The Accounts

The accounts have been prepared by Nikki Coote and verified by John James and are presented to be approved by the Committee. See attachment (PDF sent alongside minutes)

Principal income sources

Our principal income sources remain our fees from the Government and parents/carers. Additional income is from fundraising, donations and grants.

Principal expenditure

Our staff costs (combining salaries, HMRC employer contributions and employer pension contributions (NEST)) are our largest operating cost followed by rent for the village hall and insurance. Our next significant costs are consumables and new equipment.

Investment

We now have a 30 day notice account to benefit from more favourable interest rates, however have no long term investments.

Key figures: 2023/4

Treasurer's account balance:	£3,216
Reserve account balance:	£23,875
30 day notice account	£10,144
Combined account balances:	£37,235
Income over expenditure during 2023/24:	£5,121

Review of 2023/4

In terms of 2023/4, the key highlights are as follows:

- Combined account balances of £37,235, which is over the EYA recommended 3 months operational costs.
- Profit of £5,121 was made. Therefore, the preschool is currently operating at a profit. PLEASE NOTE: This profit includes £4000 grant money restricted to outdoor provision (£3k grant and £1k donation) and c.£650 donations for planning permission for curiosity corner of which all are ring fenced, so actual profit is just under £500
- Rent / insurance expenditure of £12,352 (2022/23 £5,564). This significantly higher than last year, as we accrued some of last years rent and insurance costs increased.
- Consumables spend was £1,381. Its very difficult to compare to last year as the categorisation of consumables was not clear.
- New equipment spend was £1,650 (£0 last year) and we have spent money on items to increase provision of care such as breakfast club equipment and renewed bedding.
- We cancelled the accountant and bought the book keeping in house to save c.£1000.
- Net fundraising income of £1,527 (2022/23: £271) this has been vital in returning the pre school to profitability and we thank all who have helped with fundraising efforts. This total includes c.£650 raised for the planning permissions for curiosity corner.
- Donations of £1,234 (2022/23: £0) an anonymous donation to be used for a fixed purpose (outdoor provision) along with some other small donations.

Reserves

30 day notice account was opened back end of 2023 which proved us with more favourable interest rates. Our reserves are over the 3 month operating costs recommendation by EYA.

Managers report

Attendance

September 2023

Funded children 2-year-olds = 2 , 3–4-year-olds =6, No private children **Total 8 on register**

September 2024

Funded children 2-year-olds =5, 3-year-olds =12, Private 4 **Total 21 on register**

Current Staff

Level 5 20 % Designated SGL

Level 3 60%

Unqualified 20 % - studying L2

Paediatric First Aid - 100%

CPD – SEND Level 3 – Natasha (Deputy and SECO)

SGL – Natasha & Natalie (Natalie SGL)

SG – Cristina

Key workers in place

Natasha – 7

Natalie – 11

Cristina - 3

Ethos

Supporting each child to give them the best start in life, emphasis on Personal Social and Emotional, Physical and Communication. Giving opportunities to every child to support independence, self esteem

Curriculum:

Small groups, age appropriate, capabilities and abilities, likes and interests

Child led, Adult led, balanced

Close relationship with School and fantastic transitions

Funics, Curiosity Corner, Forest School, Weekly sessions on baking / crafts – Jenny

Links with Library

Termly focus Trip out – Christmas – Smart trees

Future options – dance and gymnastics

Procedures

Monthly payment plans for parents

Parent term communications on their child s next steps, development and support

Updated Policies

Newsletters

Tapestry entries

Holiday Club

Longer opening hours

Breakfast