

MINUTES OF THE CHIPS' ANNUAL AGM

FRIDAY 8th October 2021

AT ALLENBURYS OR VIA ZOOM STARTING AT 7.30pm

1. Welcome

Present:

Graham Nickson, Matt Cooper, Teresa Ivison, Alex James, Becky Thomas – Trustees

Rita Adams, Duncan Adams, Anita Ash, Michelle Brown, Conrad Brown, Gill Dowling, Alison Edwards, Hannah Edwards, Ben James, Helen James, Karen Lavers, Sue Sharp, Tony Sharp, Peter Ives-Carpenter, Michael Ives-Carpenter, Karen Slater, Hazel Smith, Jack Smith, Helen Smith, Wendy Tucker, Kerry Viccars, Jennifer Watts, Danny Cox

Young volunteers: Shanaya Clayton-Walker, Mia Cowling, Victoria Pink, Meiyun Westley

On zoom:

Sukanta Banerjee, Joanne Edwards, Simon Tatam, Tricia Campbell, Tracie Capocci, Rochelle Elliott, Bethany Saville, Flik Skinner, David Windridge

2. Re-Election of Trustees

Thank you to everyone who has agreed to continue as a Trustee.

3. Resignation of Trustees

Hazel Smith, Marianne Palmer and Angela Lee have stepped down.

4. Appointment of new Trustees

Chris Russell and Jodie Smith were elected as Trustees.

5. Election of Officers

Chair – Graham Nickson

Vice Chair – Matt Cooper

Treasurer – Simon Tatam

Fundraising – vacant

Minute Secretary – vacant

6. Minutes of the 2020 AGM

The minutes from last year were agreed and accepted as a true record. No issues were raised.

7. Chair's Report

Thank you for attending, welcome to the CHIPS' AGM.

This has been a challenging but still successful year for CHIPS. All Playschemes and Clubs are now running with the number of children attending gradually increasing back to pre-Covid levels. Families who were isolating are now returning. New children are being welcomed from the extensive waiting lists.

The level of turnover of staff and volunteers remains as pre-pandemic, but due to restrictions on visitors to the sessions, recruitment of new personnel had been slow. This is now a priority for CHIPS. If you would like to work or volunteer for CHIPS, or you know anyone who would be interested, please get in touch.

The CHIPS' income from donations and fundraising is at a lower level than prior to the pandemic.

My first duty in this annual report is to thank our hardworking office staff who continue to deal with all the challenges which arise and ensure that playscheme sessions and clubs continue to run.

I would like to say a particular thank you to:

- ❖ Wendy Tucker who continues to organise the wages for CHIPS staff across all of our settings with such great skill,
- ❖ Matt Cooper who, again for many years, has helped to ensure that our IT systems work, developed the website, interviewed new staff and sorted out many things to ensure that CHIPS keeps going,
- ❖ Teresa Ivison, who has been part of CHIPS from the very beginning, for her support in many areas including interviewing staff, support for Leaders, serving as a Trustee and her wise advice,
- ❖ Everyone who has served as a CHIPS' Trustee this year. We have sadly said goodbye and thank you to Angela Lee, Marianne Palmer and Hazel Smith who have stood down as Trustees. However, we are fortunate to welcome two new members to the board and Hazel remains a huge supporter of CHIPS and an active fundraiser.
- ❖ Simon Tatam has stepped up to take on the role of Treasurer, for which we are most grateful.
- ❖ Many thanks go out to our fabulous fundraising team - Hazel Smith, Alison Spagnolleti, Karen Slater and Helen Smith.
- ❖ A special thank you this year to Rita Adams. Rita has been volunteering for over 20 years assisting first Helen, and now Anita, with the charity's accounts. It is due to her meticulous work that the CHIPS accounts remain in such good order.

My grateful thanks as always go to all the playscheme and club staff, on every level, who work at the five CHIPS Playschemes in Bishops Stortford, Hertford, Ware, Cheshunt and Hoddesdon on Saturdays and during the holidays.

Last, and certainly not least, can I say a huge CHIPS THANKYOU to the many wonderful volunteers who help at the playschemes. They always bring extra laughter, fun and help make CHIPS' Playschemes even more special.

New Office:

CHIPS moved to new office accommodation in February 2021, giving us accessible accommodation with parking and meeting rooms. Unfortunately, a further move has been forced upon us as the building is to be redeveloped.

Christmas Parties:

Back in December 2020, 96 children attended the parties organised by CHIPS. As in previous years, an entertainer organised the games and dancing and refreshments were provided. Each child received an individually chosen gift from Father Christmas who once again visited each party. Many thanks to Karen and Helen for all the shopping and wrapping.

Christmas Playschemes:

135 children attended the Christmas Playschemes, in December 2020

Easter Playschemes:

115 children were each offered 2 days, across the 5 playschemes during our Easter Playschemes.

Summer Playschemes:

We had several challenges during the Summer of 2021. A minor problem with the Ofsted registration for the Hertford scheme resulted in us not being able to use the venue. We therefore had to quickly combine the Hertford and Ware summer schemes at the Ware site. The issue has now been resolved.

There were a lot of behavioural issues at all schemes, requiring us to limit the number or the length of sessions given to certain children.

All of the CHIPS Playleaders, supported by Teresa Ivison, did an amazing job of finding ways to deal with these issues, protect staff and the other children and keep the parents and carers informed of the issues.

This summer visitors were welcomed back into sessions providing great entertainment and experiences for the children. Several outings to local and outdoor activities also took place.

Saturday Schemes:

Saturday Club sessions resumed in September 2021. A large majority of children were happy to come into sessions to see their friends and enjoy spending time with each other. There were initially some behaviour issues, but the children quickly settled.

The number of children attending sessions is lower than in the past as some families are still reluctant to send their children. As staffing levels rise; the priority will be to admit new children from the waiting lists.

CHIPS' Activity Clubs:

CHIPS continues to run activity clubs to enable children and young people to focus on one activity.

Climbing Club

The Climbing Club has experienced disruptions to its sessions over the year as the climbing centre has been closed with sessions only resuming at the beginning of the summer Term 2021.

The waiting list for the Climbing Club has grown with 22 children. Thank you to Vira Denys for her commitment to the club.

Cookery Club

The cookery club continues to be popular with 10 children attending which is the absolute maximum for the room size.

It has been a challenging year with sessions being run via Zoom during October.

Since April, Thursday evening sessions have resumed at Pinewood School.

There are now 33 children on the waiting list. We are very grateful to Gill Dowling who continues to run the club

Computer Club

The club resumed in person sessions in September 2020. Originally starting without the use of any consoles, as ensuring controllers were disinfected was not going to be possible.

CHIPS will look to put in place a programme of securing funding so that 2 laptops can be replaced per year.

Peter Boyle, assisted by Ben James, continue to do an excellent job running the sessions.

Teen Club

This summer five trips were arranged, despite difficulties due to venues being unsure when they would reopen. Unfortunately, many of the outings were poorly supported due to commitment and communication issues with parents. Going forward, to prevent this from happening again, new procedures will be introduced.

We welcome Karen Lavers to the role of the group's leader.

Model Railway Club

Members of the Hoddesdon Model Railway Club continue welcoming CHIPS children to their meetings once a month. They continue to develop activities which the children can enjoy. We are very grateful for their support.

Volunteers and Volunteer Co-ordinator:

While a core group of volunteers continued to support CHIPS through the pandemic, recruitment of new volunteers was put on hold until summer 2021.

At the end of July, we said goodbye to Alex Macdonald who had been our Volunteer Co-ordinator for approximately a year. We welcome Karen Lavers who has stepped into this role.

Development Officer:

Helen Smith is in her second year of this new role within CHIPS. Her main focus is applying for grants from other charitable bodies. Competition for grants remains extremely high and she works very hard to secure them; with some success.

Fundraising:

During the past year the Charity's main fundraising has been in the form of monthly online raffles.

Face to face events resumed in June with a Twilight Walk. A 5k walk followed by street food eaten outdoors.

The fundraising team has just held a vintage afternoon tea, again outdoors. We have been very fortunate to receive generous support from many local and national companies donating food items and raffle prizes for these events.

CHIPS needs to raise at least £50,000 each year through fundraising and donations. Although Hertfordshire County Council does commission our playschemes and specialist groups, their funding does not cover all children. They do not pay for children under 5 and siblings without special needs.

If you would like to run a fundraising event for CHIPS, or raise money for CHIPS, we would love to hear from you.

Finances:

Our core funders at Hertfordshire County Council have been extremely supportive this year, meaning that we had a stronger year financially than expected. I would like to say thank you to the SEND commissioning team. Helen has been a star securing grants for CHIPS in face of stiff competition.

We also received a very generous donation from a family closely associated with CHIPS from the start which was very welcome. My thanks go to our Accountants who have supported us again this year. I would also like to say thanks to Wendy, Rita, Jo and all the CHIPS Office team for their ongoing work to assist in the charity's ever growing financial management

Matt responded to say Thank You to Graham for the amount of time and commitment he gives to CHIPS.

8.Presentation of Accounts

Although the Trustees were expecting the last Financial Year to be potentially quite challenging from a funding perspective, we are very pleased to say it was somewhat stronger than expected. This was primarily due to additional funding from Hertfordshire Country Council (HCC) in place of our regular funding arrangements which enabled CHIPS to have a greater degree of flexibility in how it operated and a significant bequeath from a family will.

A number of HCC grants that were applied for in the 2019/20 financial year were actually received in 20/21 financial year. Additionally, we proceeded to increase the level of grant applications as minuted in the previous year's AGM, to help to continue to generate funding whilst we were unable to undertake our usual charity community fundraising activities such as quizzes etc.

This enabled us to operate as many play schemes and online activities as we were able to, given the COVID restrictions. There were some increased costs in relation to staffing (e.g. more 1:1s) and a much more rapid set up for the summer schemes than usual as the restrictions lifted.

The level of IT expenditure has been higher in the last year due to enabling remote working for office staff and leaders.

Our core funders at HCC have been extremely supportive again this year, in helping us operate play schemes and activities throughout the pandemic, in recognition of how vital our services are for our families. We would also like to express our gratitude to the SEND commissioning team.

As the Chair has mentioned in his report, we've been very fortunate in having such strong support from Helen and the grants that we have received. It's extremely rewarding to see our activities in action and children and families seeing the benefit, but even more so to see the level of support given to CHIPS by the organisations around us during these challenging times.

Looking forward, there continues to be challenging economic headwinds and the impact of the pandemic is still being felt. To this end, we will continue to adopt a prudent approach towards our funding requirements and have again targeted to increase our level of grants from HCC for this financial year. In addition, we have reaffirmed the policy for CHIPS to retain at all times a minimum of six months running costs in reserve, whilst recognising that due to the seasonality of the charity's cashflow we will often operate a surplus that is in excess of this level.

To ensure that we continue to operate CHIPS within a robust risk and control environment, we have prepared a Treasury policy to support the management of the charities cash flows.

We have additionally proposed that the Charity considers opening several additional banking relationships to ensure that the charity's funds are spread across multiple banking partners, and we are fully covered under FSCS.

Finally, as I have recently assumed the Treasurers role, the last six months have been a bit of a learning curve and I would like to thank Matt, Anita and Graham for showing me the ropes and their continued support.

The Chair asked the room about any questions but there were no queries.

9. Annual Policy Review

Please see the list of policies that were reviewed in the attached.

All the details were agreed.

10. Presentation of awards to Young Volunteers

Ware nominee - Mia Cowling

Helen James and Michelle Brown presented the award to Mia. Mia started volunteering in the autumn of 2019. She was part of a group of volunteers who independently started together then made friends with each other. It was hard to choose one of the group and in a way this is a tribute to all of them. Mia started doing CHIPS for her DofE volunteering but then kept coming when she had done all the hours she needed to. We wondered what would happen after the enforced Covid shutdown and were so pleased that the volunteers returned when we restarted. Mia has volunteered most Saturdays since the return. We were also delighted to meet her younger sister who started to volunteer as soon as she turned 12 - her excitement at being old enough to come was a result of Mia's own enthusiasm. From the first day Mia arrived at CHIPS she got straight in there. Mia is very much liked by all the families who attend the scheme and the Ware team. We can hear squeals of delight from the child who is scooting alongside her. Equally she can support the children to create new games if they get unsettled and to calm them. The children enjoy her enthusiasm she shows to them when involved with the games they are playing. Mia is friendly and approachable with the other volunteers. It is so inspiring to see Mia give so much of her time to the families that use CHIPS and we are very proud to have her at our scheme.

Hoddesdon nominee - Victoria Pink

Alison Edwards presented the award to Victoria. Victoria started attending CHIPS as a child with her brother. Victoria began training to be a volunteer when she was about 10 and she used to shadow other members of staff. By the time she was 12, and officially a volunteer, she knew exactly what she was doing. We can leave her in the kitchen and she will have all the children's snack and drinks prepared without any prompting. Nothing is too much trouble for Victoria; she will help with complex children as well as any other children who attend our scheme. As Victoria knows all our children so well she is very aware of their individual needs and will often point out things that need doing for them if their linked in staff is not sure.

For the last 5 years Victoria's health hasn't been great but still she attends as often as possible. During this summer scheme she had to go for any emergency operation during the second week, all the staff were on facetime to her whilst she was in the ambulance being transferred to a London hospital. All the children chose to make her get well cards to show their appreciation for her. Come the last week of scheme Victoria was back every day to keep her mind off her problems and keep herself busy spending time with all of us.

The volunteer accreditation has been a big incentive for Victoria which she is showing lots of dedication in completing the units needed to finish her silver certificate.

Bishops Stortford nominee – Shanaya Clayton-Walker

Graham presented the award to Shanaya. She has just completed her GCSE year at school however has continued to work at CHIPS.

Shanaya is committed to giving the children a fun time at CHIPS. She really enjoys coming to CHIPS and has shown more confidence when working with the children with a variety of needs.

Hertford nominee – Meiyun Westley

Graham presented the award to Meiyun. Meiyun is an exceptional young volunteer. She is full of empathy and has such a gentle, calm approach with our young children both siblings and those with needs. Meiyun is extremely reliable and punctual and is a pleasure to be around. The children are drawn to her and she is so quick at distracting them and offering them a choice of activity which has reduced a number of meltdowns. She doesn't just follow them about but really engages with them as well as staff and we often forget she is a not a staff member.

Graham then announced that the winner of the Young Volunteer of the year award which was Victoria Pink.

11. Presentation of Long Service Award

One more presentation to make to Rita Adams.

Rita has been volunteering for 11 years and volunteers in the office to check our accounts and do the bank reconciliation.

Rita was presented with an engraved vase and flowers.

12. Close of Meeting

Thank you very much

The Chair asked if there was Any Other Business or any questions. No items raised.

The meeting then closed.