**Special Friends Club**

**Chair’s Report to Annual General Meeting**

Held via Microsoft Teams invitation on 26 November 2020 at 7:30 pm

Thank you for finding the time to join this Annual General of Special Friends Club in what has turned out to be a most unusual period. As always, we’ll try and get the administration over with as soon as possible and open the floor to members who wish to ask questions or just feed back their experiences.

To facilitate this, I will keep this very short. Any questions later down the agenda will be very welcome.

However, the period covered by this report and our accounts to be presented later, ended on 31 August 2019, and so you’ll be relieved to know that there will be very little mention of the pandemic.

During the period 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019 Special Friends Club arranged 89 different activities during the school holidays and at weekends, and two short breaks away, to Devon Cliffs & Challaborough Bay caravan parks and to Center Parcs.

Other Trustee work has included an overhaul of the website, updating Trustee training and records, and continuing the policy review rolling programme.

Our membership remains roughly half South Gloucestershire families and half Bristol families, with South Gloucestershire Council continuing to support us as part of their short breaks funding programme.

Fundraising is ongoing, and we have benefited from a number of donations and grants from small charities and organisations, and individual fund-raising efforts by members and friends. This is still an area we identified to improve on and co-ordinate more, and we have since seen the benefit of having a dedicated fund-raising trustee post, so thank you Leanne.

The activities for this period have reflected the increased number of members who have significant sensory needs, and the alteration made to our Equalities and Inclusion policy and Constitution last year. We have focused more on visits to outdoor facilities and places that are not so crowded or which offer us sole use, such as the cinema and swimming sessions and boating with All Aboard in the summer.

The older teens enjoyed taster sessions at outdoor pursuits and they proved very popular.

We also began to see and take up the offers of relaxed performances and sessions from venues who are starting to respond to the increased demand. Theatres and outdoor venues like Westonbirt Enchanted Christmas are routinely offering relaxed access, which is good news for our young people.

When our activities are able to resume properly, hopefully in the new year, we expect to see even more opportunities for socially distanced experiences – and hope that this will improve our access as well as help the nation’s health!