**SPECIAL FRIENDS CLUB**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**TUESDAY 22ND JUNE 2021 at 7PM**

**THE QUEEN’S HEAD PUB, HANHAM**

1. **Welcome**

JJ and CG welcomed and thanked everyone for coming, and all attendees introduced themselves.

Copies of the agenda, the Chair’s report and the minutes of last year’s AGM were made available to everyone. CG also distributed Covid questionnaires for attendees to fill out to try and gauge people’s appetite for activities in the current climate.

1. **Attendees and apologies**
	1. Attendees: Jane Joyce (JJ), Colin Gimblett (Chair) (CG), Maya Vaitilingam (MV), Leanne Parks (LP), Liz Stratton (LS), Helen Conway (HC), Chantal Byrne (Minutes), Stephen Bingham, Caroline Leroy, Sarah (SR) and Kevin Rosser (KR), Jo Marie Britton, Tony, Gail, Adam and Oliver Bowden, Barbara Thomas, Wendy Alford, Jo Cooper, Sarah Stone
	2. Apologies: Sophie Axford, Michelle Southgate, Claire Sutton, Geraldine Summers, Debbie Barefoot
2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The process of amending the club’s accounting period was in progress.

The minutes of last year’s AGM were approved and signed off by JJ and CG.

1. **Chair’s report**

JJ explained that her report covered September 2019 to August 2020 and was longer than usual this year, as it detailed how the club reacted to the pandemic.

We had busy half-terms during that period and lost Hop Skip and Jump. JJ commented the Trustees are still looking for new venues for the sensory children in the group.

The pandemic and associated lockdowns and restrictions had been challenging times for all, but the Trustees had managed to continue meeting, virtually when necessary, according to SFC’s Constitution, so they could agree on the direction the club should take.

JJ explained that the club’s remit was undermined by the pandemic because of the social nature of the group which wasn’t compatible with the social distancing measures in place. The Trustees were all volunteers who had to look after their own children in lockdown and didn’t have the staff to put on structured activities. In addition to this, the club didn’t want to endorse activities that might not have been safe and it was too difficult to carry out risk assessments. Also, there were a lot of families with vulnerable children in the club who needed to shield and would have been excluded. JJ commented that venues did not take group bookings and other organisations had also struggled to put on activities.

In this climate, the club managed to organise one activity at the end of the summer: the train trip at Avon Valley Railway, as it felt safe with families sitting in bubbles in individual compartments.

The Trustees had tried to keep in touch and had spent the time training, updating the SFC website and altering the accounting period to be in line with most businesses and charities.

We had offered members to suspend their membership and payments, but JJ reported that very few took up the offers and the Trustees were grateful that members had continued believing in the club. We were hopeful to put on a full programme of activities this summer.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

MV presented the accounting period from September 2019 to August 2020. This had been an unusual year due to the pandemic and lockdown preventing us to organise activities.

SFC had offered a full programme of activities up until March 2020 when the country went into lockdown.

Income was just over £60,000 for that period - this included:

* Donations from Mangotsfield Association for £3,700, Co-op for £1,200 , Severn Vale Flower Club for £550 and Chipping Sodbury Lions Club for £1,000
* Subscription: £15,500 – MV commented that the vast majority of members had carried on paying their subs which was amazing
* Members’ contribution to activities (i.e. Center Parcs, Caravan short breaks, Longleat Festival of Light, Panto at the Hippodrome): £21,000
* Grant from South Gloucestershire Council: around £16,500

Expenditure was £43,000 – this included:

* £15,000 on activities
* £24,000 on Center Parcs
* £2,200 running costs (i.e. pay for the club’s administrator, website maintenance and domain, training for Trustees and volunteers, accountancy fees)

Maya added that there was currently £32,000 in the club’s bank account and £20,000 in the club’s savings account. The Trustees were also looking at getting a better interest rate for the club’s savings.

1. **Election of officers**

CG explained that, according to the Club’s Constitution, all Trustees had to stand down. All Trustees agreed to stand again for election and stay in their current roles as detailed below.

Elections took place as follows:

All candidates nominated by SR and seconded by KR - Unanimous vote

Chairperson:  Jane Joyce

Treasurer:  Maya Vaitilingam

Secretary:  Chantal Byrne

Vice-Chair:  Colin Gimblett

Activities:  Sophie Axford

Database:  Liz Stratton

Funding:  Leanne Parkes

 Activities: Helen Conway

CG commented that the Trustees were always looking for more help and would welcome anyone willing to come forward and join the committee. JJ and MV added that we also needed to look into succession planning, as some of Trustees had now older children of college age.

1. **Change of accounting period**

The current accounting period from September to August was in the process of being changed to the usual business accounting period from April to March. JJ and MV explained that it needed to be changed as it was currently out of sync with most funders’ requirements. JJ added that the accounts were always too old from a funding point of view and this made applying for grants or reporting to funders difficult - for example, grants from local authorities run from April to March and accounts, so our new accounting period will line up with theirs and make reporting to them easier.

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) will be held in September to document the completion of the change. MV had taken the accounts to the accountant and they should be ready for the EGM.

1. **Any questions**

CG opened the floor for questions.

CG said that the Trustees were hoping to give members reasonable notice for the summer holiday activities, so everyone could plan their summer.

MV commented that any ideas for new activities would be welcome and input from members was really important.

SR mentioned Ride On Ride Out, an organisation offering tandem sessions for disabled children. LS added that free sessions for RORO were available and that she would pass on details.

SR asked if the Trustees could also look into booking a boat trip on the Matthew again as her son really enjoyed the last one organised by the club.

LP added that we would also welcome any ideas for the teens and young adults. SR suggested first aid training as a good activity for the older group – her son had attended a session and everyone attending had really enjoyed it.

CG asked if there was any feedback on the activities questionnaires and added the committee were always looking for feedback from members.

LP said the club would be limited in terms of summer activities and we were mainly looking at outdoor venues. Trustees had been looking, amongst others, into National Trust places, Ashton Court miniature railway, Wild Place, Climbing, cycling and forest school. JJ had also found out about a drive-in nature reserve.

MV reported that swimming pools were not accepting group bookings yet and cinemas were limited due to social distancing in place, which was not compatible with our large membership.

JJ also mentioned that some venues had requested detailed individual information from all attendees before the day of the activity and this was not manageable, as we didn’t have the manpower and authority to deal with this. Ideally, we would be looking at venues where members could give their details on arrival.

CG introduced HC as the latest Trustee to join the committee. He thanked everyone for attending and for completing the Covid/Activities questionnaire.

Meeting finished at 8pm