**SPECIAL FRIENDS CLUB**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY 2nd NOVEMBER 2023, 7PM**

**The Queens Head, Hanham**

1. **Welcome**

LS paid tribute to Katherine Summerhayes who passed away this week.

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

Copies of the agenda*,* were made available to everyone.

1. **Attendees and apologies**
   1. Attendees: Liz Stratton (LS), Leanne Parkes (LP), Maya Vaitilingham (MV), Chantal Byrne, Tony Bowden, Gail Bowden, Oliver Bowden, Wendy Alford, Jackie Bignell (JB), Barbara Thomas, Shaista Yaqub, Si Yaqub, Pearl Kofi, Jo Cooper, Nic Burr, Claire Sutton, Ella Hocking, Sarah Coombs (SC), Sue Richards
   2. Apologies: Colin Gimblett, Jane Joyce, Sophie Axford, Helen Conway, Sarah Rosser, Rachel Maddox, Bina Rashid.
2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of last year’s AGM were approved and signed off by LS and LP

1. **Chair’s report**

LS read from the Chairs report attached.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

MV presented the accounting period from April 2022 to March 2023.

At 31 March 2023 assets were £60,732. Over the year we have spent more than taken in but finances are still healthy.

Income was £74520, comprising member subs £17,800, member contributions towards activities and short breaks £31,643, grant from South Glos Council short breaks £16,764, donations £8313 including £1441 from James Ball for two cinema trips, £4775 from the Mangotsfield Community Association (nominated by Joseph Britton),£800 from Waitrose, £500 from the Lions Club, £300 from Rebus Medical and a £5 monthly private donation.

We have a 40:60 split of membership between Bristol and South Glos Council areas - Bristol City Council are currently not contributing.

SC asked reason why Bristol won’t fund SFC and it is that the club’s activities do not meet the BCC criteria for short breaks.

Expenditure was £86,522, comprising administration overheads of £6598 in respect of website maintenance, web hosting, Chris Quenon for IT support, DBS checks, lanyards, Zurich life for public liability insurance, and Sue Edgerley for admin services. There is also the external examiner fee of £264, Savings account interest of £39. Entry fees for activities and day trips and short break costs came to £79,660.

1. **Election of officers**

LS explained that, according to the Club’s Constitution, four key Officers/Trustees had to stand down from their role. All agreed to stand again for election and stay in their current roles as detailed below. All candidates nominated and seconded and re-elected unanimously.

Chairperson:  Liz Stratton - Jo Cooper nominated, Claire Sutton seconded

Treasurer:  Maya Vaitilingam – Liz Stratton nominated, Ella Hocking seconded

Secretary:  Chantal Byrne – Liz Stratton nominated, Jackie Bignell seconded

Vice-Chair:  Colin Gimblett has agreed to stand again – Liz Stratton nominated, Gail Bowden seconded.

1. **Constitution Wording change**

LS explained that the board of Trustees wishes to make a small change to ensure all wording in the constitution is consistently referring to disabilities and not additional needs and that the wording of the constitution flows through to matched wording on our website. MV explained that there are large numbers of applications for younger people, still awaiting diagnosis, and not enough is known which is not helpful in making decisions especially when trustees are not medically trained.

The issue

The wording in our constitution does not flow through into the wording on our website around membership criteria and does not always flow though to our decision making around applications for membership.

This is the wording in the SFC Constitution adopted on 26.9.2019:

The charity seeks to address the limited access some families and carers of children with ***additional needs*** experience when attempting to take part in mainstream leisure and entertainment.......

…..Our aim is to enable the parents, extended, families, carers and professional care providers and the ***disabled*** children and young people they care for to take part in activities....

This is the wording on the “join us” page of our website:

The qualifying child must have a ***disability*** (with documentary evidence of disability from a medical or health professional) that inhibits them from accessing mainstream activities.....

….Not all children with SEN are disabled. Some children who have SEN may also have a disability but there will be other children who have a disability but no SEN.

The goal

To have a clear match between our public documentation and our practice around membership criteria. To clarify whether we use “additional needs” or “disability” as these are different. The former is much wider and includes CYP with potentially disabling conditions or severe chronic illness or Special Educational Needs. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has an adverse, substantial and long-term effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. My belief is that the Board of Trustees has an intention to admit CYP with disabilities to our membership.

Proposed action

* Change the wording of our constitution to remove “additional needs” and replace with “disabilities” by tabling a vote at the AGM in November

(Amendments to the constitution can be made by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present at an EGM or AGM where 21 days written notice has been given to every member.)

* Re-introduce a question around rate of DLA Care or PIP equivalent to our membership application form to help Trustees in applying the membership criteria to applications

The proposal was put to the members present for a vote and was approved unanimously.

1. **Activities**

Membership survey – LS shared 76 responses.

44 responders were from South Glos and 32 were from Bristol and covered a broad age range. All questions were posed by South Glos Council.

Response ratings were between 3.4-3.7 ratings out of 4 over the various questions.

The trustees will send an update on the results to members

The main feedback from the comments was that the SFC is a “lifeline” to many families.

LS addressed some criticism, around availability of some activities. We have recently been caught out with sheer numbers of bookings, where activities have been less popular in previous years and will look to book more sessions in 2024 where availability was limited in 2023.

Also to address comments as regards to accessibility needs, it was never expected that everyone would be able go to everything but the Trustees will investigate that more as we strive to be accessible to all.

1. **Trustee opportunities** –Anyone who would like to join the committee or help in any way would be most welcome.
2. **Fundraising opportunities and connections** – LS reminded members attending to let us know if anyone knows of organisations offering grants. CS suggested easy fundraising, which the club already uses. JB suggestion we do refresher email and which the trustees agreed to ACTION
3. **Any questions**

LS opened the floor for questions.

EH would like more short breaks.

Meeting ended at 8.50pm.

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**Special Friends Club**

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

The period covered by this report is **1 April 2022 to 31st March 2023.**

The Club enjoyed our first full ‘post-covid’ summer of activities without restrictions on where we could go and how we could meet. As we remained in a strong financial position, we were able to fill the summer break with many free or heavily subsidised events to refresh the friendships in our community and celebrate being together.

We revisited SFC favourites such as Bristol Family Cycling centre, the local swimming pools and mini-beats performances at St George’s music venue while also trying out new activities - visiting Montacute House in Somerset and attending a Christmas lights display at the American Museum in Bath, for which we had some snow.

Our teens have benefited from a programme of regular rock climbing at Burrington Combe with an outdoor activity provider and practised their tennis shots with coaching at Fry tennis club. We made a regular monthly booking at a new venue for the Club hiring Super Sense, the recently opened sensory centre at Imperial Park sports club, and we offered different time slots for our teens and young adults so that they could enjoy the centre away from the younger children and siblings – for whom we booked a separate general access time slot.

After a three-year hiatus we were able to form a large party visiting Center Parcs Longleat Forest in March 2023. This was the first time we had attended in March rather than the prior visits in January. We received positive feedback about the better weather and that families were more rested and less stretched financially compared to visiting just after Christmas.

Our membership is stable at about 165 families. The board of Trustees reduced by 1 to 7 serving Trustees following a resignation due to family and work commitments. We are looking to increase the number of Trustees to 8 or more again as this is comfortable in terms of workload and responsibility. Our associate administrator has now completed a full year supporting us and we are all benefiting from her efficiencies and suggestions now that work is more familiar the second time around.

Liz Stratton, Chair of Trustees, June 2023