

**Romsey Opportunity Group AGM for 2019-20**  
**Held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 10:00, on-line by Zoom**

**Attendance:-**

Trustees – Helen Rogers (Chair)  
              Dick Hewett (Treasurer)  
              Sue Fisher  
              Ruth Martin

Apologies from Maggie Poland (Vice Chair)

Staff – Lyn Bird  
          Carol West  
          May Sherwood

Apologies from Mavis Watts

Friends and Volunteers – Mark Cooper and Sue Tippett (Patrons)  
                                  Liz Bailey  
                                  Anna Baker  
                                  Anne Hewett  
                                  Kate Ward  
                                  Sister Catherine  
                                  Karen Dunleavey

Apologies from Angela Brentnall and Caroline Wheatley

Parents and children – 5 families.

**Welcome**

Helen welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that Maggie Poland will be stepping down as a ROG Trustee. She has been a trustee since 2009, and Helen would like to thank her for all her support over the last 12 years.

**Minutes of 2020 AGM**

The minutes from last year's AGM were agreed through the use of an on-line poll. No Matters Arising were identified.

**Chairman's Report (Helen Rogers)**

Helen thanked Carol for her support in getting this distributed to everyone.

“The last twelve months have been very challenging for all charities throughout the country, and our Opportunity Group is no exception.

I would like to thank everyone associated with the Group; volunteers, staff, our families, supporters and trustees who have risen to the challenge and ensured that the Group activities and ethos have continued.

While Appletree Centre sessions were unable to take place, the contact with families was maintained. This was made possible through technology and also by the dedication of individuals who made huge efforts to make contact physically, while maintaining social distance.

There has been much creativity, flexibility and alternative thinking. Group members have taken part in a huge range of activities including knitting, gardening, walking, jogging, singing, cycling and much more. I will not name anybody individually but a huge thank you to you all.

Our staff have kept in contact with families and provided support when the need not to feel isolated was great. Things continue to be challenging but we must celebrate what we have achieved and look forward with optimism and positivity to meeting whatever challenges this year present."

### **Family Coordinator's Report (Lyn Bird)**

"As we begin 2021 our Golden Anniversary year we look back on the strangest and possibly most challenging year in our history!

The year began with 12 children attending our sessions and visits from Portage and a Teacher Advisor.

In March we entered lockdown and the Appletree Centre was closed by Hampshire County Council.

Our Trustees put Mavis and May on Furlough but Carol and myself continued to message or meet virtually. Our families felt the sting of isolation and I started a Social Media group using WhatsApp. It has been described as a lifeline during this time and I'm honestly impressed by the way our families began to support each other. It's very true to the ethos of the group offering reassurance and information, a virtual shoulder to cry on and plenty of laughter. Sue Fisher has been our visible face, using up hers and our exercise quota on her bike delivering little parcels to the families often kindly made by volunteers. Liz turned part of her house into a children's music studio and recorded a weekly video for our Facebook group.

Carol has continued to produce and send newsletters and I have attended more meetings than before lockdown!

As the summer term progressed and the Government encouraged Early Years groups to return we faced the difficulty of not fitting into the Coronavirus Regulations for a Toddler group or Nursery. Local infection rate was low and I sought advice from the Department for Education who confirmed us as an Early Years Provider with the added uniqueness of including Parent/ Carers.

Unfortunately despite much communication the process for HCC allowing us to restart sessions at the Appletree Centre did not begin until late August by which time both our MP and our Patron / Councillor Mark Cooper were also supporting our plight!

Our leavers party was another virtual occasion our first using Zoom and coinciding with the first Birthday of one of our children.

4 children were due to leave us for school. 1 child had a seamless transition within mainstream but only 1 out of the 3 other children had a place secured within special schools. The pressure on these Parents was enormous and both began the appeal process. I supported both with letters and phone calls to SEN services and we agreed to support them until they were offered a school place.

In July and September 4 children were offered specialist Nursery placements again with much stress and communication with myself. 1 of these children is attending special school nursery part time and continuing with ourselves.

Our risk assessment written by Dick Hewett, Trustee, was accepted by HCC and we both met with HCC to discuss our requirements. It was helpful that I had attended a training course on becoming a Covid secure work environment and we negotiated with HCC being able to take 5 children at each session instead of their suggestion of 2. We offered places to 6 new children 4 of whom accepted. There are now 9 children registered with us as attending ROG. We continue to support families with other siblings making the total 19 in addition to Parents at this current time.

We held sessions in October just for 2 weeks until a second lockdown they were put on hold until our 2 Christmas sessions. It was wonderful to see Mavis and our team of volunteers for those 6 sessions. Our new families are mostly settling well into the WhatsApp group and we have now begun a weekly zoom virtual coffee morning.

I am still requested reports on the children and look forward to this being much easier when able to see them in person! I meet with the Trustees regularly to review the local infection risks with a view to safely opening again."

### **Treasurer's Report (Dick Hewett)**

Dick presented ROG's accounts for the financial year to 31 July 2020, showing the following figures:-

Income – £9,850

Expenditure - £13,650

Deficit - £3,800

Income has been greatly reduced due to fundraising opportunities being severely limited due to the pandemic. For example, our main fundraising event of the year due to take place in May 2020 had to be cancelled. Dick is predicting an end of year balance of around £10,000, so the trustees believe it is now the time to submit another bid to Children in Need. Sue Fisher is taking the lead on this, and if successful, the £10,000 would be granted in September.

Helen thanked Dick for all his hard work in managing ROG's accounts, and she also thanked him, Sue and Caroline for their fundraising efforts, all of which have been gratefully received. She also thanked Romsey Rotary for their donation.

The accounts were officially approved through an on-line poll.

## **Election of Officers**

Helen handed over to Lyn Bird to manage this part of the meeting.

- Helen Rogers was proposed by Lyn to continue as Chair for a further year. Liz Bailey seconded the proposal, and Helen accepted.
- Lyn proposed Dick Hewett to continue as Treasurer for a further year. Sue Fisher seconded the proposal, and Dick accepted.
- Caroline Wheatley was nominated by Sue Fisher as a new Trustee, seconded by Ruth Martin.
- Ruth Martin and Sue Fisher were proposed by Liz Bailey, seconded by Dick Hewett, to continue as trustees, and both accepted.

All five trustees were elected through an on-line poll.

## **ROG Constitution**

Dick Hewett proposing 3 motions in regard to changes to our Constitution (all seconded by Sue Fisher):-

Motion 1 will enable us to hold general meetings virtually if needed;

Motion 2 clarifies the signatories on our accounts;

Motion 3 clarifies ROG's status as a "not for profit" organisation.

All 3 motions were supported unanimously through an on-line poll.

The revised Constitution will now be sent to the Charity Commission.

## **Calendar of events**

- Regular Zoom meetings with the children and their families are ongoing.
- Romsey Charities Event – November 20<sup>th</sup> 2021.
- Joe Godden is hoping to run 100 miles in a month in aid of ROG but he hasn't yet confirmed when he will do this as he has injured one of his legs, but hopefully it will be soon.

## **AOB**

- Anne Hewett has sent a Get Well card to Angela Brentnall from everyone at ROG. Angela has been very poorly with Pneumonia.
- The trustees will send a Congratulations card to Caroline Wheatley and her husband on becoming parents.
- Mark Cooper thanked ROG for being an "island of positiveness" in these rather strange and difficult times.
- Lyn informed us all of the death of Joan Thomas who founded ROG back in 1971. She was an inspiring woman who took on the world on behalf of local children with additional needs. It was noted that all of us are thrilled that we have been able to continue her vision.

Helen closed the AGM at 11:00