

# Fontwell Community Play Centre

**A report for Walberton Parish Council by the Trustees of The Community Play Centre @ Walberton  
2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020**

## Introduction

Walberton has a thriving Community Play Centre that has been operational since 2015 (The Community Play Centre @ Walberton - Co Number 07640357, Reg. Charity No. 1143734). It is situated in a purpose-built building on Parish Council land at the centre of the Parish.

The fast-approaching review of the Walberton Parish Neighbourhood plan has a proposed policy to develop a site at Fontwell known locally as the “National Trust triangle”. The Neighbourhood plan team are proposing, along with the landowner, an innovative scheme to provide 40 dwellings (a large portion of the 60 dwellings allocation the Parish has been given) that will go hand in hand with another community play centre at the same development.

## The Walberton Site

The building cost in the region of £370k and was funded by a charity Bank Loan, s106 money from the Holly Tree Grove estate, crowdfunding and other fundraising projects.

This is a very successful enterprise.

A brief summary of the financial activity from the published accounts is below (including an estimate for 2020 as yet unpublished n.b. including a period of Covid lockdown).

Year Ended 31 <sup>st</sup> May	£ Turnover
2017	242,462
2018	319,825
2019	359,489
2020	356,175

## The Organisation

The play centre has an exceptional management team led by Kelly Townsend. It employs a staff of 18 full-time and part-time professionals.

It is open from 7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. on Monday to Friday and for 51 weeks of the year.

This Autumn term starts with the Centre catering for 35+ children in any one session, aged from 6 months to 4 years 11 months in two “Covid 19 precautionary Bubbles” in our main building at the Playing fields in Walberton.

There are 4 session blocks in the day:

7.30 a.m. -9.00 a.m., 9.00 a.m. -12.00 a.m., 12.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. & 3.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.

It is important to remember that not all children attend all sessions and therefore up to 65 different children can be seen in any one week.

The 0-2 years old sessions are full for every day of the entire academic year.

This opening week we are full for all sessions in both “bubbles” and we have had to disappoint a number of parents. Waiting lists are now being compiled.

We are also catering for Primary school age children at the “Wrap around before and after schools” clubs in the Sports Pavilion on the playing field. It is necessary to use this extra site because of Covid 19 regulations and we are fortunate to have another Ofsted approved facility so close.

Again, there are two “Covid 19 precautionary Bubbles”. Reception and KS1 in one and KS2 in the other. The capacity is 30 children however not all children attend all sessions in the morning and afternoon, and 50+ children are “on the books”. The staff conduct the drop off and pick up to the local Primary school.

It has become apparent that some parents are now choosing the Primary school their children attend not only by reputation, but also if there are “wrap-around” facilities available.

These children are from the whole of the Arun district (Littlehampton and Chichester, but mainly from the six villages).

The Play Centre continues to be oversubscribed and has a good Ofsted rating.

## **Fontwell**

The trustees are proposing a similar facility at Fontwell that will be able to house both day care and “wrap around” services.

Since the original Neighbourhood plan ADC have granted planning permission for 442 new dwellings within this part of the parish. We do not know the likely demographic of the new residents but it will be of a younger age group than that of the parish at present.

Also planning permission was granted for 175 dwellings in Walberton which will have a similar effect on the age demographic of the village.

The likelihood that the catchment area will severely contract without a new facility is high.

There is no Primary School in Fontwell and so children will have to attend school in Barnham, Clymping, Eastergate, Slindon, Walberton or Yapton. None of these schools have a “wrap around” service or an allied Play Centre. The management of our play centre is actively considering a minibus service that could facilitate this need. These villages are all areas where development is likely.

## **Finance**

The trustees would seek to finance the new project in a similar way to the existing project.

There is an assumption that the National Trust would cede the plot to Walberton Parish Council who would in turn license the charity to construct the appropriate buildings. No estimates for the construction have been sought.

We can demonstrate a successful ‘track record’ and a popular facility but will rely on loans and an element of Community Infrastructure Levy if available.

The charity has reserves of £150,000+

**To sum up**

We have an excellent working model in Walberton with experienced management and staff. We will be using systems that work well and a wealth of practical and professional knowledge. The charity will be able to use the same team, ethos and structure at this additional site.

We acknowledge Karl Roberts's note (ADC's Director of Space) that the proposal to provide a new facility at Fontwell similar to the one at Walberton is welcomed. We have been encouraged to begin a dialogue where he is happy to have meetings on Zoom or MS teams to pursue the project. It is likely that the Walberton Neighbourhood plan is the only one in the district to include this essential infrastructure planning.