

**PC/17/11**

**Paper to the Otterton Parish Council.**

Dear Councillors

As many of you may know from the Parish Magazine and local paper unfortunately Little Otters Pre-school has made the decision to close down the provision in the village hall as the number of children attending is insufficient to make the business sustainable although the East Budleigh Village Hall has been very supportive and flexible.

The closure of this facility has been seen by many as a great loss to the community, to the schools of the Raleigh Federation, and to the churches as it will limit even more the number of children coming into the villages and potentially the schools. It is therefore with delight that I can let you know that Little Otters is currently working with the Raleigh Federation and OFSTED, our governing body, to open up a 'mini' Little Otters preschool within the hall at Drakes Primary School.

At the beginning of this academic year the Management Committee of this charitable organisation made the difficult decision to continue to run, recognising it's responsibility to the community and the children within it's care, despite low numbers, until the reserves built up through prudent management in better times, ran out - thus our announcement of closure earlier this term. To enable the pre-school to move into Drakes school some modifications need to be made to comply with the very strict rules and guidance from Ofsted which, whilst only minor do come at a cost as does the 'change of control' document which is necessary for the Exeter Diocese as Drakes school is owned by the Church of England which will cost £200.

As the pre-school has been running unprofitably for some time the disposable income available now is very low. Little Otters has always, and will continue to, have a robust programme of fundraising events, the funds from which allow us to provide a rich and varied curriculum for our children and support our expenses, however at this time I regret we do need some help.

We have approached the PCC of All Saints Church and asked them if they would be willing to let the pre-school use the East Budleigh Church hall free of charge for two hours each week to provide a Toddler Group which we cannot do at the school for safeguarding reasons. This group provides help and support for new Mums and their infants which is so important for this potentially vulnerable group. We await their decision but have been given favourable feedback.

As Little Otters has been a valuable part of the local community for many years and has largely provided a succession plan for both Otterton and Drakes Schools and to enable us to make the most of this 'lifeline' which has been offered I would be grateful if the Parish Council would consider making a contribution towards our immediate costs. Should you require further information or sight of our accounts I would be happy to supply them. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request; I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes

Mary Dennis

Special Needs Coordinator Little Otters/ Resident of Otterton

March 2017