

Thank you all very much for coming. We appreciate your time.

I would like to begin by giving you a bit of history of the pre-school. It began in the 1980s as the Play Group, but gone through several stages of change.

Currently it is a registered charity and a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance, which meets Ofsted criteria and receives funding from the Government. We have two members of staff, and currently provide 15 hours a week of Early Years education. We have also started a popular baby and toddler group, which runs on Tuesday mornings.

Angela Brown has been supervisor of the group for a long time; this term we welcomed Sharon Lewis, a former childminder from Wadebridge whose sterling efforts have already made a big difference to our setting.

St Mabyn Pre-School's main sources of income are the fees and funding from children. When the children are under three years of age, we get around £6 per session for them. When they are over three, we get nearly double that in Government funding.

Four-year-old children used to be a good source of income for places like St Mabyn. But with parents increasingly encouraged to get their kids in school earlier, we haven't had access to that money for some time, and have been bumping around the bottom line.

St Mabyn Pre-School is a small setting which always poses difficulties. The most difficult times are when there are too few children to support our staff and rent costs. This difficulty is augmented by the fact that with a small pool of parents, we lack the necessary manpower to do larger and more lucrative fundraising.

This is not the first time that St Mabyn Pre-School has been in difficulties. In the past five years we have received sustainability grants from government bodies to help us stay afloat. We also had a consultant from the Pre-School Learning Alliance, Jenny Ahern, who worked with us in 2007 to help us sharpen up our strategies and procedures.

It was in this time that we decided that St Mabyn should become a market contender by extending its sessions to 15 hours a week, to stay up to date

with services provided by neighbouring villages such as St Kew and St Tudy. Fifteen hours is how much free funding per week the Government allocates to each child over three.

This was a bold, spend-to-earn strategy. As long as we have enough three-year-olds, it works well: the problem is that when we do not, we lose money very fast. We are in such a period right now, as our financial forecast shows. We do have a thriving toddler group and some young ones dribbling in. If we carry on as we are, we will need to fundraise £5,000 before July.

Just to put that in perspective, that's the approximate worth of three to four fully funded children who claim the full 15 hours.

The entire committee of St Mabyn Pre-School is stepping down this term due to other commitments. A committee member also becomes a trustee of the group, and personally liable should debts incur. When we held our AGM last month, the current committee decided that it could not put new volunteers in the position of making the decisions that have to be made right now.

Another complication is that we are due an Ofsted inspection in the spring.

We feel the group is worth saving. For one thing, we are the biggest users of the village hall, which receives rent from us. We have two excellent staff members. The committee has worked hard over the past years: we have all our policies and procedures bang up to date on a dedicated laptop; we have just launched a new website, with a blog, and we received a grant for £5,000 from the county council to improve our outdoor area.

St Mabyn Pre-School is an important feeder into the school, as many parents like to keep their children in the school community in which they start. If they start off at St Kew or St Tudy, pre-schools, they're much less likely to then change to St Mabyn when the child is ready for school.

At the moment, we are hugely disadvantaged by the perceived unrest about the questions surrounding school closures. We have had parents come look at the group, but decline to send their children here because they don't want to enter their children into a school system that they see as unstable.

Equally, more parents are working, which means they need more flexibility or longer hours as provided by childcare nurseries.

This term we dedicated all our efforts into a “stay and play” session trying to attract new parents to the village; however, we had a very disappointing turnout. We are undergoing a current dip in the birth rate, so there just do not seem to be enough children out there.

At our AGM we decided we had reached the point where we either had to drastically change our model, or fundraise the necessary thousands to keep going in our current format. Either way we will need community help.

St Mabyn Pre-School is a community group and at this juncture, we decided to put it to the community to see if they wanted it to continue.

We are going to put up a pledge board in the village shop. If your organisation can pledge to either give or fundraise an amount of money for us, and you agree with what we are trying to do, please pledge it. If you can hold a coffee morning or car boot sale or indeed any event in the next few months, just estimate what you might make and write it on the list. We will be also be pursuing fundraising ideas of our own. We don't need it all at once; it can be rolled out across the next term as long as we have enough to keep going each month.

The village hall is very sympathetic to our plight, and a rent break from them will represent an immediate part of this amount.

I feel it's important to qualify that there's no guarantee we won't be in this position again. Our current crop of small people will be funded at the end of July, but their parents are under no obligation to actually use all their funded hours at St Mabyn.

If we can't keep the pre-school going, we will explore options of having some kind of parent and child group in the village: one option is that we could change it to a baby and toddler group only. We will continue to look at our options.

The pledge board will be up in the village shop until the end of November. We will tot it all up at the end of the month, and if we feel there is enough

support for the group, we will hand it over to the new committee with a clean conscience.

If there is not, however, we will have to give our staff notice and close doors at the end of the term. This is a very difficult move to make but the situation has not come about overnight. Equally, there is still hope.

Many thanks to all of you for coming.