



Friends of Church Stretton Library

Supporting the library in the heart of the community

FRIENDS OF CHURCH STRETTON LIBRARY

MINUTES OF 2022 AGM 22nd JUNE

Treasurer's Report

During the last year we received c. £9,200 from donations and fundraising and paid £450 costs, giving £8,750 balance. £1,500 was spent on the library plus another £1400 (partly offset by grant funding of £951), on VIC equipment. Our year-end balance is £23,159.44.

Election of Trustees

As required by the charity's constitution two trustees had to stand down this year. Accordingly, Sheila Davies and Madeline Haigh stood down, but were then unanimously re-elected for a fresh term of service. Margaret Quartly, Ben Warren, Graham Lewis and Beth Furlong continue as trustees and Inese Nielsen was elected as a new trustee.

Shropshire Council Draft Library Strategy

Sheila Davies outlined the history of the Library from November 2014 when Shropshire Council (SC) announced its intention of relocating the library service to the Academy and letting the Church Street building. This resulted in the formation of the Library Support Group which launched a successful legal challenge, and then the Support Group developed into the Friends of the Library Charity. In 2019 SC produced a Library Strategy which placed Church Stretton into tier 2, which would over a period of years have to become fully financed from within the town.

The new Draft Strategy has abandoned the inequitable tier system. It seeks to retain all libraries and develop additional services at them to support the local community. However SC's finances are insecure following years of reductions in central government support which have drained the local authority's reserves. This means some libraries could become at risk of closure. Factors which should put Church Stretton Library in a favourable position include its location between Shrewsbury and Ludlow, its high footfall and the extra opening of the VIC by Friends volunteers. It is our opinion that encouraging people to use the library and developing additional services in Church Stretton Library, to meet the library's new strategic priorities, will help secure the libraries long term future.



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Consultation on the draft Strategy

Ben Warren identified Shropshire Council's 6 strategic priorities for libraries and related them to our own initiatives and ideas e.g. the VIC promotes economic growth and resilience and sustainability, and there is scope to expand sales items and thus increase income.

SC intend to install self-service machines in each library, though this is at odds with user feedback on the importance of personal friendly service.

Leisure services are also being asked to develop additional services for the community. It is important that the Library, Mayfair and the Leisure Centre work cooperatively to provide complementary rather than overlapping services.

Members are urged to respond to this consultation which runs until 3rd August.

Suggestions for Library Improvements funded by the Friends

Friends of Church Stretton Library is proposing spending £10,000 on the library in this financial year to help the library meet some of their new strategic priorities.

The Staff have suggested purchasing mobile bookshelves to provide more flexible spaces for meetings and events and would like the big exterior map upgraded. The provision of a full height partition between the computer room and the VIC has been investigated but found to be very costly.

Following the formal meeting drinks and nibbles were served and members were encouraged to give written suggestions and comments on the Strategy and possible purchases (see below). Sheila Davies will share the spending suggestions with the staff, and the comments will feed into the Consultation response.

Friends of Church Stretton Library AGM 22 June 2022 Feedback thoughts from members

What additional services might be offered from the library?

- Already offer Family and Local history support – suggestion that there should be a (small?) charge for this – especially when phone or email enquiries. (Needs a lot of thought and discussion re pricing etc.)
- Voluntary “Homework Help” for children in year 9 / 10 who need extra support
- Debt / Pension / Benefits Advice sessions? – I already do this at Ludlow for Age UK
- Adult literacy and numeracy 1:1 sessions
- Confidence with numbers
- Budgeting
- Homework Clubs?



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- Liaison with school – support for learning difficulties youngsters who need extra support
- STEM support coordinated with schools, Primary and Secondary
- Record “Rhyme Time” songs / stories for parents to download and use at home
- Set up discussion groups on contemporary issues
- People willing to read aloud to visually impaired lonely people on a regular basis in their homes or in the library (would need relevant checks etc on the individuals who volunteer) but could be good eg for nursing homes or supported housing places
- Scrabble club

Your ideas for spending the £10,000

- Definitely new computers (the monitors are probably OK)
- Map stands for the historic OS maps (currently rolled up and inaccessible) Agree!! Especially for OS plans 1:25,000 and 1:1250
- VIC display board backing is faded and so does not do justice to the art work displayed

Anything you heard today you like / dislike?

- Self serve “things” – contradiction with Shrops. Council “*Well-being*”. A waste of space and money!
- Self service machines unnecessary in CS. The money could be much better spent on other things
- Agree – don’t think they are a good idea – waste of public money! We lose the personal touch
- Very important to maintain social contact; these machines not relevant in a library the size of CS