



Friends of Church Stretton Library

Supporting the library in the heart of the community

Annual Report April 2023 - March 2024

Library Budget Cuts - What can we do?

Shropshire Council need to make massive savings of **£62 million in 2024/25**. They have recently announced they are going to **review library services** and start **discussions with local partners and communities** to see how they could continue outside of council control.

A similar process took place ten years ago, which led to some libraries being relocated and managed by community organisations. In other places Town/Parish Councils took over the running of their local library or agreed to make a financial contribution to Shropshire Council towards the running costs of their local library.

In Church Stretton, Shropshire Council proposed relocating the library to a much smaller space in Church Stretton school. After a long campaign by the local community, Shropshire Council agreed to continue running the library in its current location, with financial contributions from both the Town Council and Friends of Church Stretton Library.

However, these financial contributions were never asked for because of the implementation of a new Shropshire Council Library Strategy.

With this mind, we might need to increase our fundraising efforts this year. We have ideas on how we might do this, but will need the help of the local community if we are to succeed.

Please come to our AGM so we can share our ideas with you and gauge how much support there is for this approach.



Annual General Meeting, 20th June

7.30pm, URC Hall

Shropshire Library Budget cuts- What can we do?

Following the AGM there will be wine, soft drinks and nibbles in the URC garden.

ALL WELCOME





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How we helped the library

In December we were delighted to provide £10,000 towards the purchase of mobile shelving designed to enable more flexible use of the space in the library. The remaining funding for the shelving was awarded to Shropshire Libraries from Arts Council England as part of 'Live Well With Your Library' initiative.



Feedback from local residents on the new shelving has been very positive and having mobile shelves has made it a much better space for running events and talks in the library. We also replaced the planter in front of the library to smarten up the building.

Each year we like to subsidise at least one event for children in the library. Last summer we funded a summer holiday session with "Zoolab" to educate children about animals and the natural world.

Our expanding team of volunteers continue to open the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) from February to November on Mondays and Wednesdays when the library is closed. In 2023 they provided help and information to a staggering 1,630

visitors. Our thanks to everyone who has made this possible. This work helps the library to meet one of the new Shropshire Library Strategy targets, that of promoting Economic Recovery and Growth. The Visitor Information Centre attracts visitors into the town, which helps keep local businesses financially viable.





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Events

Our events team successfully ran events covering a broad range of interests and involving other community organisations.



We hosted talks on two inspiring local environmental projects: Sandra Whitlock described fundraising for the purchase of High Leasowes: three fields now managed to improve habitat and increase biodiversity. Hily Clarke, the founder of “Glyn’s Garden”, presented the continuing story of development of a therapeutic public garden.

Two talks of literary interest attracted very appreciative audiences. Following Janet Longstaff’s 2023 guide to Turkish literature, this year she gave a wide-ranging presentation of Russian literature. It allowed us to make the most of the additional space that the new mobile shelves provide.



In March, Ben Warren described the creation of C. S. Lewis’ Narnia stories and then explored the evidence for an intriguing new theory that there is a secret Narnia code – that each one of the seven Narnia books is based on the characteristics of one of the seven medieval planets. Ben also organised and presented another of his popular and challenging quiz nights, which have become an annual feature of our events programme.

To celebrate National Poetry Day in the Autumn, Joanna Clark made a very welcome return organising both a writing workshop and a reading event.

All these events raised valuable income for our continuing support for the Library.

Thank you to all the people who helped with this.

Friends of Church Stretton Library, Church Stretton Library, Church Street, Church Stretton
SY6 6DQ - email churchstrettonlibrary@outlook.com Charity Number 1182554
www.strettonlibraryfriends.org.uk



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Accounts Summary 2023-24

Thank you to everyone who helped make this another successful year in which we raised £8,111.48. A special thank you to the supporters who pay a small monthly donation by standing order. This raised £3,841.00 and a further £935.47 from Gift Aid. We made £1,447 through sale of our calendar and a big thank to Geoff Taylor who sources the photographs for this. This year we gave the library grants or goods worth £10,516, most of which was towards the new shelving.

Income 2023/24	Activities	Events	1,362.55	
		Calendars	1,447.10	
		Books sales/market	482.56	
				3,292.21
	Donations	Regular		3,841.00
		Other		535.01
	Gift Aid			935.47
	Interest received			216.86
Expenditure 2023/24	Admin Costs inc insurance			709.07
	Income over Expenditure (profits)			8,111.48
	Grants to library			10,516.75
Surplus for year to 31.3.24				-2,405.27

More detailed accounts available on separate sheet and on our website.

How you can help us

Donations - please consider making a small monthly donation. Details on how you can do this can be found in the library as well as on our website:

www.strettonlibraryfriends.org.uk

Admin - If we are to increase our income, we will need people to assist with the increased administration this will involve. Please could you help with either:

- **Data entry** - entering data into an Excel spreadsheet and/or database. This can be carried out working from home.
- **Leaflet delivery** - help giving out leaflets around the town e.g. Coop, market.

If you think you might be able to help with any of these, please contact us:

Email Churchstrettonlibrary@outlook.com or Tel 01694 723455

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