

Haddenham Community Library
Annual meeting: 21st September 2016
Report of the Chairman

Welcome to our annual open evening at which we report on the past year and our prospects for the future. As you know, we are both a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. This means that we send official reports each year to the Charity Commission and Companies House, but this meeting is the way we report to the local community, including our volunteers and sponsors.

First, a mention of the way in which we are developing opportunities for the whole community to take advantage of our premises and facilities. On your seats you will have seen a list of the many activities we offer. We hope to revamp the building in the future to do more in this respect and I'll say more about that in a few minutes.

A further bit of background. When we were established as a community library in 2013, we reached an agreement with the County Council that they would give us an annual Resource Grant and rental income from the Children's Centre. The Resource grant was agreed for five years. It is intended to support most, but not all, of the salaries of our library manager and library assistant, who are employed by the County Council and seconded to us. The running costs of the building are our responsibility, in the terms of a 25 year lease.

We are a community library in at least two senses. Firstly, we have developed a vision for the library as a centre of lifelong learning, enhancing the usual library services with opportunities for residents and organisations to meet and enjoy an ever-widening range of activities. Secondly, we rely very greatly on the work of a fine band of volunteers (many of whom are here tonight and who commit their time every week) who share the work with our staff on a rota basis. We have some fifty volunteers with a range of skills and experience and they share a commitment to making the library an efficient, friendly, safe and inclusive venue. They are led, of course by Emma and Ali, our excellent staff.

I'd like to say a bit more about our partnership with the County Council, which is crucial to our work but going through what they call challenging times. The Council's government grant has been seriously reduced and will be non-existent next year. The Library Service is making significant savings in this year's budget, mainly by changes in the operation of the main Aylesbury library, and has to save a further £500,000 over the next four years to meet the Council's medium term financial strategy. Members and senior officers have been looking at options for making these savings. The favoured

option at this stage – although decisions will not be taken until November and Member support for it is not guaranteed – is to establish some kind of Trust (a not for profit distributing organisation, an NPDO). Such a trust would have a governing board, probably with representatives of the Council and partners in the library service, including community libraries. Explanatory meetings were held in March for community libraries, of which there are 14 across the county, all with different histories and operations. Since then, I have organised two meetings for the community libraries to share experience and priorities. We had been hoping to see a business plan by now but things have been delayed by the combination of a new Chief Executive starting this month; a focus on work towards a unitary authority for local government in Bucks; and, reviews of the services which the County has outsourced in the past. I have written to the new Chief Executive, Rachael Shimmon OBE, welcoming her to Bucks and encouraging her to take an interest in the future of the libraries, especially ours. We are promised a draft business plan next month for our comments. There is no information at present about what proportion of the £500,000 savings would have to come from community library budgets or how the savings would be phased. In these circumstances, we are pushing for an early review and extension of our Resource Grant, which is now in the third year of five.

Which brings me to our financial position. As you may recall, we started this financial year in a healthy position (there is a summary on the chairs), having built up reserves in accordance with Charity Commission guidelines. This was possible through the generous support of our partners and sponsors in the village, and I'm delighted to welcome some of them tonight. The list of them is on the wall over there.

Speaking of which, we have developed a great partnership with Haddenham Screen, who have made themselves an important part of Haddenham's social life, with seasons of eight films every fortnight. The library acts as their box office and they share their profits with us. They have already donated four figure sums to the library and I believe their treasurer David Warburton is here tonight with some more good news.

We have also generated income through sales and lettings. The bridge clubs meet on Monday and Tuesday and there are yoga classes on Thursday. Part of our income is from the use of the library by the Children's Centre, especially on Mondays and Wednesdays when they have exclusive use of the premises. This income however is reducing each year and its future is uncertain. The Centre is now managed by Action for Children (ACF) on behalf of the County Council and they are involved in the bigger debate about the future of the budgets for children's centres across the country and especially in Oxfordshire and Bucks.

We therefore expect our financial position to come under increasing strain next year and so it is vital that we get a good renewal of our County resource grant and maximise income from outside use of the building.

Despite these increasing pressures, we are developing ideas for further improvement to the facilities we offer. We think the children's library area is looking tired and not catering appropriately for the full range of young people. So we have commissioned professional advice on good practice elsewhere and hope soon to commit resources to an upgrade. Secondly, we think that we should have a new toilet for use by library customers. One is being designed with internal access near the main entrance. Thirdly, we want to be able to offer groups of adults and children a space, separate from the main area, for meetings and discussions. With generous help from our president Simon Vickers and his company Rectory Homes, drawings have been made for this and will shortly be approved by the trustees. We would also like to offer customers a facility for refreshments. These developments will draw on our reserves and we will be looking for further grants from new and existing sponsors. I will keep everyone in the picture of progress.

So there is a summary of our progress and aspirations. Emma would now like to make a brief report and then we'll be happy, with Tim Mozley our treasurer, to try to answer any questions.

(my comments will be available on our website and Haddenham.net)

Steve Sharp, Chair of Trustees