

# Minutes

## Friends of West Barnes Library Committee Meeting

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 6.30pm

### 1. Present

- Toby Ewin (Chair)
- Penny Price (Treasurer)
- Dan Griffiths (Secretary)
- Alison Honor (Committee Member)
- Theresa Clarke (Committee Member)
- Brenda Brevitt (Committee Member)
- Sarah McAlister (Committee Member)

### 2. Apologies

- Revd Rachel Taylor (Vice-Chair)
- Mary-Jane Jeanes (Committee Member)
- Madeleine Maguire (Committee Member)
- Anthony Hopkins (Head of Library & Heritage Services)
- Karren Whyte (Library Service Manager)
- Danny MacDonald (Library Manager)
- Hina Bokhari AM (West Barnes Ward Councillor)

### 3. Library Manager's Report

Visitor figures have been steadily increasing month to month (barring a slight dip in December) with over 2,000 visitors every month, which is over double the amount compared to April 2021.

However, we are still nowhere near the attendance figures pre-pandemic, which is the goal we are continuing to head towards.

Some new activities are in the pipeline:

- We have had a qualified and insured yoga teacher approach us to host some yoga sessions in the future, following on from our recent health and wellbeing campaign. She is undergoing the recruitment process currently.
- Audrey and Angela will also be running a watercolour painting course for adults starting Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 1-3pm, which Audrey and Angela have both done careful market research on by visiting other Merton libraries. A big thank you to them.
- Roz has also restarted her Ancestry sessions, which we encourage the Friends to promote.
- SMT has organised a range of health and wellbeing events under the banner of 'MindSpace' which is based around physical exercise for to increase mental health; all of

which have been booked up very quickly. (Apologies to anyone who missed their chance to attend.) SMT also been working on acquiring some exciting new health monitoring technology to be used within the library. Watch this space.

On Covid restrictions, we are no longer mandating the wearing of masks but will be keeping our advanced cleaning schedules in place, as well as Covid-specific risk assessments.

On 'Libraries+', there is still a lot of work happening in the background, which is why communication may not always be the most effective at times, but wider comms will be made available soon and, as Anthony says, we are all happy to host a meeting specifically for the building management system.

Finally, on the hublets, we'd like to thank Mary-Jane with the regular testing she does with the tablets. They are a new technology and this testing helps us to make sure they run effectively throughout the day.

Can I also give a final thanks to Toby and Ernie for covering at the library when I have needed to vanish.

#### **4. Head of Libraries & Heritage Services Report**

Dan to request an update from Anthony for the next meeting.

#### **5. Chairman's Report**

The display boards, bought by the Friends last year, have already been used for presentations about Motspur Park history and about Trafalgar Day (given Lord Nelson's Merton connection), and are currently showing a brief history of the Library itself to mark its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary (and the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the present building).

#### **6. Treasurer's Report**

No update necessary from Penny since the last meeting, as there had been no expenditure.

#### **7. Update on Events**

- The Rendezvous Club is meeting again, though (because of continuing Covid-related limitations) with fewer attendees than previously.
- Scrabble Group is also running again on Thursdays with improved attendance.
- The Committee is keen to get events up and running.
- Eight people attended the Flower Arranging class at Christmas.
- The next Flower Arranging class is on 9th April for Easter.
- Using Eventbrite for these events is challenging, but bookings remain possible at the Library desk.
- Madeleine has prepared a quiz so can arrange a date for Quiz Night. Subject to Covid considerations, the Committee hoped a date in early April might be possible.

#### **8. Discussion on Hublets**

- Anecdotally seems that the new hublet tablets are not being well used yet.
- Accessing and logging into the hublets is proving challenging.
- The sign-up process requires an email address, though this may be skipped.
- Toby is collating feedback and will share with Anthony.

- The hublets do provide a wider range of newspapers and magazines.
- Concern that it is difficult for less technically literate users to access newspapers.
- Perhaps it would be possible to provide a short laminated guide, for new users, about how to log in.

#### 9. Discussion of 'Libraries +'

- Merton is trialling use of library card and pin to access library out of staffed hours.
- Currently being trialled in mornings (while staff are in the library).
- Plan to implement extended hours from 4<sup>th</sup> April with card and PIN access.
- The keypad is difficult to view in darkness due to lack of street lighting.
- Video cameras for security, though we do not know if they are (or will be) being monitored real time.
- Concerns about the safety of staff and visitors out of hours.

#### Questions:

- Will paid staff be on their own in smaller branches like West Barnes?
- Elsewhere has this scheme increased library usage?
- How will safety and security concerns be addressed?
- Is the plan to ultimately reduce staffing through this scheme?
- What does the scheme mean for security guards such as Jogen?

#### 10. Any Other Business

- Toby has asked Anthony for an update on the library re-development plans
- Understanding is there is at least one developer interested in the site

#### 11. Next Meeting

- Dan to contact Anthony and agree dates he can attend
- Dan will then communicate to the Committee to agree a date