

SOUTH CHINGFORD COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Charity Registration Number 1153772

Financial Summary Accounting Year 2022 - 23

INCOME

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Balance brought forward | 17970.15 |
|-------------------------|----------|

Operating income

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| Membership fees | 73.00 |
| Internet use | 6.50 |
| Printing | 238.78 |
| Knitting Group | 519.80 |
| Book Sales | 773.14 |
| Language groups | 46.68 |
| Craft | 12.65 |
| Donations | 238.15 |
| | 1908.70 |

Funding

| | |
|--------------|--------|
| Ward Funding | 299.00 |
| Other Grants | 150.00 |
| Sundry | 94.54 |
| Rental LBWF | 572.00 |

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Bank Interest | 0.00 |
|---------------|------|

20994.39

EXPENDITURE

| | |
|---------------------|---------|
| Bank payments | 3595.39 |
| Petty Cash payments | 524.56 |

T6874.44

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Bank Balance | 16819.90 |
|--------------|----------|

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Cash Balance | 54.54 |
| | T6874.44 |

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CASH EXPENDITURE

| | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Stationery | 52.14 |
| Books | 0.00 |
| Newspapers | 119.70 |
| Cleaning Materials | 106.46 |
| Catering etc | 189.20 |
| Repairs etc | 10.86 |
| Furniture | 0.00 |
| IT Supplies | 0.00 |
| Postage | 0.00 |
| Sundry | 46.20 |
| Cash adjustment | 0.00 |
| | <u>524.56</u> |

BANK EXPENDITURE

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Telephone | 840.45 |
| Computers | 159.37 |
| Computer & Printer Supplies | 0.00 |
| Waste | 673.96 |
| Cleaning | 105.00 |
| Entertaining | 375.00 |
| Stationery | 128.70 |
| Insurance | 596.77 |
| Furniture | 0.00 |
| Sundry (aircon) | 716.14 |
| | <u>3595.39</u> |

SCCL Chair's Report for AGM 14th June 2023

The Slow Rebuild Continues

For the first report period since 2019, four years ago, the library has been open throughout the full year. We have had to recover volunteer numbers, restore full opening, attract new members, and repopulate the events and activities calendar. Progress on these various fronts is detailed below.

The Future at 265 CMR

What has happened over the last year has been somewhat shaped by the lease situation. From the legal aspect, the council's 15-year lease on this building expired on 15th July last year, some 11 months ago. The building owner, Keith Hibberd, has offered WF council a new lease, to enable us to carry on operating here as before. We have been assured both verbally and in emails that we are valued and that things will carry on, and just told repeatedly that negotiations are ongoing. So the lease must just be holding over until terms are agreed.

Membership

Since we reopened on 31 March last year, we have been taking new members, and there are about 90 of those. As previous pre-covid members enjoyed no benefits during our closure, we have continued to allow these free membership. As soon as our situation is clarified with the council taking out a new lease, we will revert to normal operation, and take the fees for those members who wish to renew their membership.

The Books

Several of the new volunteers have taken enthusiastically to book management. Kath Roberts, with many years of experience of working in Essex county libraries, has taken overall responsibility for the books, and the books, both downstairs and upstairs have been very well re-organised and thinned out by Steve Marson. He is also correcting the book catalogue. The physical layout of the adult fiction section has also been much improved. Events in the window area used to expand and squash up the start of the adult fiction area, making sections of books inaccessible to readers, and being inconvenient to both parties. This situation has been resolved by backing the start of the section with hardboard, making a physical divide between activities and books, and no longer requiring any movement of shelving during normal opening times. The ability to push the shelves back against the wall still remains to accommodate the occasional large evening meeting.

One disappointment is the perception that the numbers of readers post pandemic has not returned to earlier levels. This may be that habits have changed over the two years that we were closed, or that members have still not got used to our being open again. It is to be hoped that social media promotion and word of mouth may get numbers of readers increasing over the coming years.

It is evident that book reading is still popular, given the numbers of books that we sell, rather than those we lend from the library. So people are purchasing what we consider to be not our best books in batches of three for a price which would allow borrowing unlimited numbers of our best books for a year.

Volunteers

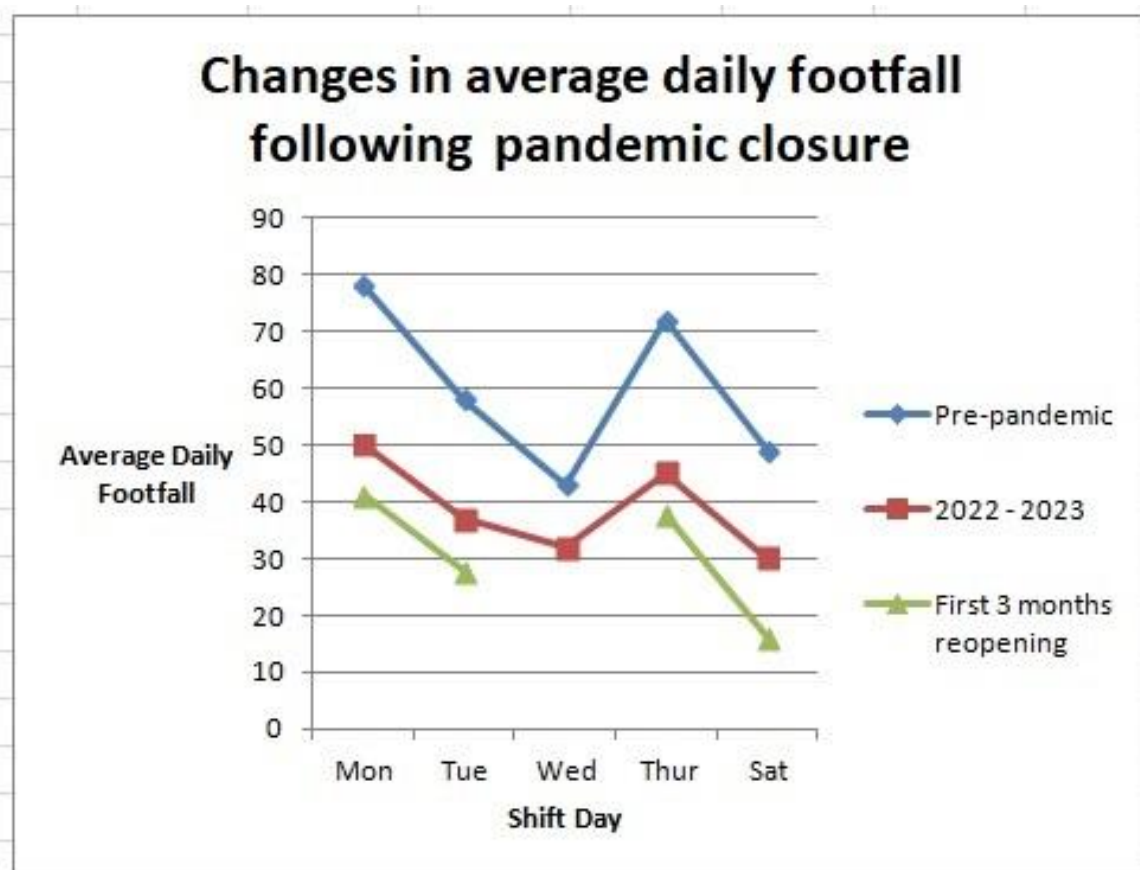
Volunteers are the lifeblood of the organisation, without which we would not be able to operate at all. We have three who have been with us for the complete journey to date; a period of about eleven and a quarter years. The majority have joined somewhere along the way. Some have moved on, of course, perhaps moving away, or gaining paid employment, or just becoming inactive for one reason or another.

As of a year ago (start of this report period) we had some 20 returning volunteers and three new ones we had recruited. We had already started a recruitment drive for new volunteers, which included paper adverts on noticeboards, social media, and the council's online process to tap into their pool of volunteers, known as Legends of the Forest. We set a limit of 20 on the number of volunteers we are seeking. The recruitment process was slow at first, but gathered pace last August for a few weeks, and then again from November until February. Eventually we recruited a total of 18 new volunteers. We currently have about 33 active volunteers (a few dropped out along the way) and we are no longer actively recruiting. Most of the new volunteers are highly active and motivated and have injected new energy into the workforce. Regarding shifts, we began with all days and shifts open excepting for Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons. Saturday afternoons opened again on 12th November, with Wednesdays finally reopening in mid January.

Pre-pandemic, we operated on a system with each day being organised by its own coordinator. It became clear that this model would no longer work, partly because we could not find willing volunteers to take on the roles of the coordinators, almost all of whom had gone, and also as volunteers needed far greater flexibility in working to cover all shifts, with a smaller, but perhaps more dynamic, workforce. Instead, volunteers now sign themselves onto shifts, using a rolling rota visible to all, located behind reception. This system seems to be working well. We have also started a library WhatsApp group which anyone can join. This assists volunteers in making late adjustments to their work schedules, and greatly improves internal communications.

Footfall

There are limited smooth patterns to current footfall making conclusions hard to draw. However, trends are possible to see. It is useful to compare footfall pre-and post pandemic, to see if things have changed, and to compare the situation in Spring last year to the current year, to see whether or not numbers are increasing. An unchanging long term trend is for highest footfall to be on Mondays and Thursdays, with Tuesdays in the middle, and lowest numbers on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This largely results from the activities which take place on these days. The graphs below shows average footfall/month on each day, for January to April 2019 (pre-pandemic), on first re-opening last year, March 31st until 27th June 2022, and for this report period, 28th June 2022 until 30th May this year.



Clearly the relative numbers from day to day maintain the same general relationship. Numbers on initial reopening were about half pre-pandemic levels, with Saturdays a little lower (we were only open on Saturday mornings then). It also reflected the extensive time it took people to realise that we were open again. Numbers now have rising to broadly two thirds pre-pandemic levels. Whether this reflects a permanent change in people's behaviour, or a loss that we will be able to redress, remains to be seen.

Finances

You can see from the summary financial report that SCCL is in a relatively healthy financial position. Principal sources of income at present are second hand book sales, funds generated by the Thursday knitting group "Knit and Natter", and council rental of the building. We did run with a small loss.. I will leave any further details to the Treasurer's report.

Partnerships and Events

Many of our well-established weekly events are running routinely. The current situation is indicated on the board behind reception. Recently, we have made public the library Google calendar for anyone to view. This is more detailed than the board information, and enables the situation to be viewed from anywhere at any time. In brief, the French class and craft group run on Mondays. If sufficient interest is demonstrated, a council run beginners' IT course can start on Mondays, with all necessary equipment supplied. An exciting new event on Tuesdays is the baby and toddler rhyme time which runs during school term time, run by Kath and other Tuesday morning volunteers, and is building numbers. You may also note in the Children's area the octopus, and other examples of the new decorations. You can also see the beautiful new window art "Dive into a good book this Summer" These are all the work of Natasha, who has offered to do decorations inside the library. The poetry-reading group meets monthly on the first Tuesday. Chase Lane nursery children visit during term time, as before, weather permitting, and we are also pleased that the

Hearts Day nursery have now visited a few times. We are hopeful that a council run embroidery workshop will run a five week course on Wednesdays, after an initial failed start. Thursday mornings sees the familiar “Knit and Natter” group, followed by the Chingford conversation class at lunchtime, again during term times. Regular external events include the Valley Ward community police on selected Thursday afternoons, and the Valley Ward Councillor surgeries, on four Saturdays each month.

New events and activities have appeared. During the extreme heat of mid July last year, the library set up as a “Cool Space” as a refuge. Few people took advantage of this, but it proved very pleasant for the volunteers. Conversely, during the winter months, the library became a “Warm Space”. We registered with the council, but did not sign up to the contract, finding it a rather restrictive process, and a massive document. We funded the space ourselves, but I do not believe that we reached the people who really needed help. In December and January, the library became a base for a police pop-up surgery, and since then the Anti-social behaviour team have been meeting on Wednesdays at Albert Crescent, and they used to store the associated gazebo in the library. There has also been a series of Housing Surgeries in the library, covering both private and council rental. These may well resume in the future.

We are pleased to report that we will be resuming participation in the Summer Reading Challenge for Children in early July, and also hosting a MacMillan coffee morning once more on Thursday 28th September.

In December and January, we participated in the second window art trail, getting our window painted outside, along with many other local shops. The next window art trail goes live on 27th July where, together with 18 local shops, our window art will celebrate local residents, talking about safety and their thoughts and hopes for Chingford Mount. Selected participants will be interviewed outside the various premises, and this may present an extra opportunity to publicise the library. There is an online application form for people to use and I hope an applicant or two from our community may be forthcoming.

The “Steps into Work” council job recruitment service used to use the library on Fridays when we were closed for normal activities. It is hoped that they may return in their new guise on Wednesdays at some future time, which should also help the Wednesday footfall, and also our financial situation.

A challenge for many of the newer or less familiar events is publicity and promotion. We are pleased that our social media publicity is now much improved following the appointment of a social media officer, Diana, and we are definitely reaping the benefits.

Trustees

South Chingford Community Library, as it has charitable status, is governed by a board of trustees. We are pleased to report that we co-opted three new trustees at a meeting on 21st April this year. Firstly, Steve Marson, a new volunteer who joined us in November last year. He is also a shift leader and working long hours on book reorganisation. Alan Siggers is already familiar to most of us as a former Valley Ward Councillor for many years and former leader of the conservative group on Waltham Forest council. Having also worked for WF council, and being in property management, his knowledge of the property business, council workings, and property law will be of immense value to us. Naila Mir is the chair of the LoveSouthChingford Group and Valley Ward Police Panel, as well as holding several other local community posts and a senior position in an international bank in the city. She brings a wealth of local knowledge beyond the library, as well as valuable commercial acumen. These three are in addition to existing trustees Greg Pope, our secretary, Chris Cratchley, Luke Kelly, and myself Richard Ashen as current chair. Following a decision at the same meeting, we allowed Narinder Matharoo, our original secretary back in the

beginning, to retire with honour. Following a serious accident he has been unable to attend the library for several years. We have offered him an honorary lifetime's membership and thank him for his long term service.

The vote that members have been invited to participate in has partly been to ratify the appointment of the three new trustees. In accordance with our constitution, existing trustees are also required to stand down in rotation, and to seek re-election should they wish to return. Greg and myself have therefore stood down and sought re-election as part of this vote.

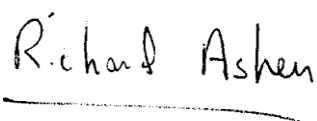
Drawing the Threads Together

Over the last year we have satisfactorily recruited volunteers to replace those lost during the pandemic closure, and these have re-energised the operation of the library. We have recruited new members at a rate of more than one a week. Most events have returned and new ones have appeared. Footfall is increasing, but not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, and we hope that this increase will continue. This is probably our principal challenge. Tempting our book borrowers back in greater numbers is a further challenge, so that the public sees us as a lending library once again, in addition to being a second-hand bookshop.

Until it is confirmed that the council has signed a new lease with the building owner, and our occupation of this building is more secure, our situation remains uncomfortable, and the organisation is awkward to run in some respects, as can be seen from this report.

Given the number of council-related events that are hosted by the library, in addition to our own, we are clearly fulfilling our mandate. Given the council's allegiance to 15-minute neighbourhoods, whereby a library should be within the time limit to reach on foot or by cycle from anywhere within the borough, we may well be essential to meet this requirement for residents living in the far flung areas of Valley ward, such as the south western end of Hall Lane or Russell Road.

I will conclude by saying, on behalf of the Trustees, I express our thanks to all volunteers, members, local councillors, Valley ward council members and Valley Ward police (principally Shashi), and other library users without whose help, the library could not have prospered in the past in the way that it has, and we remain positive in the belief that SCCL will continue to flourish in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Ashen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Chair of SCCL Trustees

14th June 2023