

SCCL Chair's Report for AGM 12th June 2024

The Future at 265 CMR - the situation until the end of April 2024

This report covers the period 01 April 2023 until 31 March 2024, with updates over the last months of events since. It covers briefly the main points of a complicated sequence of events over recent months. The situation changed fundamentally last September. Up until that point, we had received assurances from all sides that the council would be taking out a new lease with the landlord to enable our continued operation in this building. At that point, we were suddenly informed that this decision had been reversed and it subsequently became clear that the end of this month (June 2024) was the date when the council would cease paying for the lease altogether. This prompted the "Save the Library" campaign with its various petitions to be started in February, as our future from next month became completely unclear. There must have been five to six thousand signatories to these petitions, clearly indicating the level of interest in saving SCCL. I will update you on the current situation at the end of the report.

Changes in Operational Arrangements

With the future uncertain, and likelihood that SCCL will need to generate more income, the Trustees have already been looking at ways to enhance current revenue streams and generate new ones. In general, all attendees at events are expected to pay £1 for each session. Hot refreshments are also provided during open hours, with the same £1 donation anticipated. A fundraising day was held on 20th April which raised some £650 with 200 attendees.. Quiz nights with Bingo are now held with increasing regularity. A Sunday sale day/fete was held on 19th May, with stalls, tombola, face painting etc, which raised just over £250, with likelihood of more to come. From recently the library has been open on Sundays for light refreshments, for the same donation of £1.

Following the fundraising day, when the bookshelves were pushed back against the wall, it was decided to leave them there, to increase the space in the library, making SCCL look more like a conventional public library and save a lot of work whenever a large event is held. There are plans to remove the raised section at reception and also a desire to improve the internal lighting, to make the interior look more appealing and less intimidating from the outside.

We are much more focussed on the need to increase revenue now.

Membership

We are conscious of the fact that we have been unable to guarantee any service at all beyond the end of this month. Therefore we recently decided to offer free membership to anyone new who wished to join. When things continue in July, we will need to generate increased income. So we will directly increase new annual adult membership or renewal fees to £2. I expect the child fee will be correspondingly increased to £1. Membership currently allows the borrowing of the not for sale books on our shelves, up to four at a time, for a period of a calendar month.

The Books

The trend has continued for members and other visitors much preferring to purchase books than borrow books, even allowing for the current temporary offer of free membership and a much simplified membership application

form.

By careful rotation of books for sale, organisation on increased numbers of trolleys and selection of titles and authors, book sales have approximately trebled from the start of this year. To be specific, up to the first three weeks in April, income from book sales has increased to £947.10 up from £282.24 last 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 twelve 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.

We currently have around 35 volunteers, and the number has been fairly stable over the last year. We have recently taken three new volunteers, but have now stopped recruiting, placing new applicants on a waiting list to be reviewed in July. The intention is to be more selective with new volunteers, to try to ensure that they can make a useful contribution to the organisation. A good example is recent arrival Demitra Michael who has assumed responsibility for producing a new website which is looking good. The original website has not been updated in over a year due to lack of effort available.

Footfall

From 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024 we have had 253 days opening, with a total footfall of 11863 and average footfall/day of approx. 47.

Finances

Under the current way of operating, our finances are slowly increasing. As stated, from 1st July it is all change and extensive new revenue-raising methods will be needed.

Our Treasurer of long-standing, Stuart Manning is retiring, and he will be delivering his final Treasurer's report this evening. We are most grateful for his prudent and sage managing of the libraries financial affairs and wish him well. He is being replaced by Steve Marson, who has already assumed most of the duties, and we are just awaiting for Barclays Bank to finalise approval for the changeover.

What is happening in the library

Our long-standing events are well-known, and are displayed on the wall behind reception. They should all ideally be displayed in our Google calendar which anyone can view.

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=scclfeedback%40gmail.com&ctz=Europe%2FLondon>

A whole host of new events are planned or just starting, and I will give a flavour here, although things may change. For the little ones, Toddler Toy Time now follows Rhyme time for an hour on Tuesday mornings. A new creative writing class has started today, and an Art class is planned. CREST are planning to run a bereavement kitchen here. The LoveSouthChingford repair shop is to operate here. Then a 1-2-1 rehearsal space may be made available for 1Note2Notes Music Academy, which teaches children to play musical instruments, and we also hope to offer tutorial space to the Bishop Tuition Academy for assistance with Maths and English. Diabetes UK is also represented in the library, and a HEET project adviser has visited to advise on keeping safe and warm at home. There have been discussions with an enquirer who wishes to run a cryptocurrency course.

With our need to boost income, all events are now required to make a contribution to the libraries funds.

Trustees

South Chingford Community Library, as it has charitable status, is governed by a board of trustees.

The current Trustees with their major responsibilities are listed below:

Richard Ashen	Chair
Greg Pope	Secretary
Steve Marson	Treasurer, Book Management, Library Organisation, Social Media
Chris Cratchley	Funding, Volunteers
Luke Kelly	Events, Quizzes, Promotions, Social Media
Naila Mir	Events, Fee Negotiation, library use scheduling, Funding
Alan Siggers	Property, Council Matters, Rents, Lease Negotiation

In accordance with our constitution, existing trustees are required to stand down in rotation, and to seek re-election should they wish to return. Chris and Luke have therefore stood down and sought re-election. The result of the vote will be reported at this meeting.

Where We Are Now

With just months to go to the end of our tenure, we were highly uncertain what would happen. Then, out of the blue, we (Alan and myself) were invited by the council to a meeting to discuss the future of SCCL. This took place on 2nd May with Aydin Sipologlu, Assistant Director Property, and immediately made our future a little clearer. Tentatively the agreement was:

- SCCL negotiates a two year lease with the building owner, beginning 1st July 2024
- The council will provide a level of support
- An optional break clause to be included at the end of the first year, requiring the agreement of both parties

This was cheering news, but the building owner still had a generous offer to purchase his company, including this building as an asset.

Further meetings took place on 3rd June, and then just yesterday, when the final sticking point emerged as the need for a company to act as guarantor for the £50K to £60K annual funding. Further discussions took place today, with Alan Siggers to discuss details with the building owner, and our parliamentary candidate Sir Iain Duncan Smith to also talk to him. About two hours before the start of this meeting, we learnt that, following these last minute discussions, the council has agreed to act as guarantor. So the way is clear at last for SCCL to take a two year lease with the building owner, and ten months uncertainty has finally been resolved.

I will conclude by saying, on behalf of the Trustees, we have to express our special thanks to a few non-library individuals. Firstly, our parliamentary candidate during this election period, Sir Iain Duncan Smith. He is now our patron and he has been enormously supportive of the campaign to keep SCCL open. He is a very regular visitor here, and chats freely with anyone in the library. We may well not have had any chance of retaining our use of this building without his help and influence with key people. Also the building owner Keith Hibberd has retained faith in us and shown enormous patience in refusing to sell his company, with

this building as an asset, at least in part because he admires what we do. We should also thank the leaders of the Community Libraries Network who we recently contacted for advice, and whose network we have now joined. They are a great source for advice on fund-raising, and we had a delegate at their meeting today. Finally, we 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 on this site over the coming two years initially, and then beyond, unless or until new premises become available.

Richard Ashen

Chair of SCCL Trustees

12th June 2024

SOUTH CHINGFORD COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Charity Registration Number 1153772

Financial Summary Accounting Year 2023 - 24

INCOME

Balance brought forward	16874.00
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Operating income

Membership fees	71.00
Internet use	0
Printing	449.00
Knitting Group	277.00
Book Sales	1753.00
Language groups	0.00
Craft	46.00
Events	160.00
Donations	231.00

2987.00

Funding

Ward Funding	0.00
Other Grants	0.00
Sundry	15.00
Rental LBWF	4722.00

Bank Interest	0.00
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24598.00

EXPENDITURE

Bank payments	4289.00
Petty Cash payments	1018.00

19291.00

Bank Balance	19221.00
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Cash Balance	70.00
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Charity Registration Number 1153772

Financial Summary Accounting Year 2023 - 24

CASH EXPENDITURE

Stationery	56.00
Newspapers	61.00
Cleaning Materials	107.00
Catering etc	304.00
Repairs etc	15.00
Furniture	0.00
Decorations	29.00
Postage	12.00
Window cleaning	300.00
Sundry	134.00
Cash adjustment	0.00
	<u>1018.00</u>

BANK EXPENDITURE

Telephone	865.00
Computers	160.00
Computer & Printer Supplies	832.00
Waste	806.00
Cleaning	496.00
Entertaining & catering	106.00
Stationery	184.00
Insurance	602.00
Furniture	0.00
Sundry (aircon)	238.00
	<u>4289.00</u>