

CHAIRWOMANS' REPORT 2023

Ladies & Gentlemen,

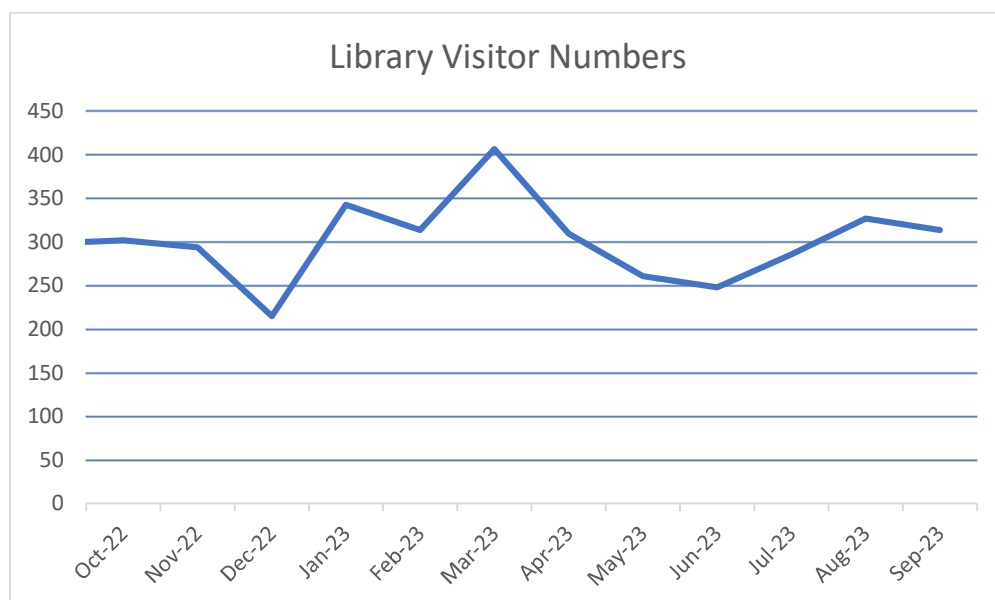
I am very pleased to welcome you all to our AGM meeting this evening and to see so many of you here.

Opening Hours & Footfall

We are now mostly opening in our usual shift pattern, Monday, Tuesday and Saturday mornings, Thursday and Friday afternoons.

The first half of this year was very challenging. We had difficulty keeping the library open due to the inability of recruiting and keeping volunteers. Over the Christmas period we were closed for nearly 2 weeks. The second half has seen us fare much better. We have still had to close the library or restrict the hours we are open but this has got better month on month and as more volunteers come on board and are trained, we will hopefully get back to being able to fulfil our contracted hours. We are in the process of reviewing those hours, which may cause us to make a couple of minor changes. We are planning on keeping the library open over the Christmas week, excepting 25th, 26th December 2023 and 1st January 2024. Fortunately, despite the first half of the year, we have seen our footfall increase from last year and as we organise more events, we are expecting to see those numbers increase again.

This year we have been able to re-start our quarterly Lunchtime Talks on Wednesdays, our last one in October, named 'The Real CSI' was a real winner and we had 45 visitors attend. I have included a graph in the report which gives you a visual of visitor numbers so that you can see how we are progressing. As the graph is for the year Oct 22 to Sept 23 the October talk has not been included.



Grants & Fund Raising

Earlier this year, to cover the coldest months, we were lucky enough to be awarded a government grant to become a 'Warm Space', which was a great help in helping us pay some of our energy bills, we have applied again for this grant, hoping it will be awarded. The

Parish Council has continued with their support in paying for the ground maintenance costs. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Parish Council for their continued support.

This year we continued with the Blaby Lottery and we now have a regular number of tickets sold every week where a percentage of the money comes directly to the library, we are receiving an average £46 per month as a source of income, the same as last year.

We continue to rent the library to LCC for Panel Group meetings which brings us some revenue.

In addition to our Friends Membership (let me just remind you all, your subs are due soon!), we continue to sell donated books which has always proved very popular with our customers, so this continues to be a good revenue stream for us.

We have continued to build on the fund-raising methods that we use. We still rent gazebos (which we have obtained through grants) and tables to individuals or groups within the village, we sell vegetables donated from the local allotment holders. Any donated books that we cannot sell either because of their condition or just haven't sold we sell for a small fee to World of Books. We also have another use for our donated books, thanks to one of our creative volunteers, Ellie, we now have 'A Blind Date with a Book', this is not an all-year project but has proved to be very popular. All of these bring in small amounts but nevertheless they will help us to continue running the library.

The Monday morning 'Coffee Zone' brings in welcomed revenue as does the Monday afternoon Knitting Group. Thank you to all of you that take part.

Vic as our interim treasurer will confirm later what the current financial status is.

Building

This year we have been looking to replace the front door and its surrounds, we have had a few quotations to look at. The money to buy would have been taken from grant money we already have and from a further grant we were hoping to get. As the new door style would have been a sliding door, we have been reconsidering this in the light of the recent power cuts and the problem our local Co-op had when their door locked shut with customers inside. We may still replace the door and its surround but on a like for like basis. Watch this space! You will have noticed that the inside layout of the library has changed, which means we now need some extra shelving, we should be able to pay for this out the grant money we already have.

We now have a new Defibrillator located on the outside wall of the library, in All Saints Close.

Marketing

Last year we decided to discontinue with the library website as we believed that most of our customers either came into the library or would find us on social media such as Facebook. This seems to have been the right decision, we have therefore saved ourselves money that can be spent on other things.

The committee decided to send out a questionnaire to Sapcote and Sharnford residents, these were sent out with SPC's 'Sapcote Star', unfortunately we missed the deadline for the September edition of the 'Sharnford News', so it will be included in the December edition. We've had a good response and at least 1 new volunteer from this, let's hope that when Sharnford respond it will be just as encouraging.

Events

Summer Reading Challenge – this year's numbers were a disappointment with 17 taking part but only 5 children completing the challenge. It may be that it coincided with a lot of change in the library but the Committee will look at doing something different with the school next year to try and encourage an increase in the number of children participating.

We have reached out to our local primary school to discuss how we can support with delivery of the curriculum, especially for pupil premium learners. We have staff with enhanced DBS that can support with this. We are looking at providing a Lego club, once trialled it will determine future activities. We will be taking part and have a 'Blind Date' book stall at our local primary school PTFA Christmas Market.

Volunteers

Several of our volunteers have still not returned to volunteering with us since COVID and it is now unlikely that they will do so, but I am pleased that we have managed to recruit 7 new volunteers this year and would like to welcome them all to the team. It was also encouraging that when we had our 7th birthday celebration in July that so many attended. It was a lovely evening, the food being prepared by our own Sue Woodward, who gave us a wonderful buffet, it was good to see so many volunteers attending, on a very wet and windy night. We are in the process of working with local secondary schools by offering work experience placements for year 10 and year 12 learners. We also have a Duke of Edinburgh student volunteering with us for a 12- week placement. I would like to acknowledge and thank Mel Lancelley, our new Volunteer Co-ordinator, for her continued efforts to cover all shifts and bring new volunteers on board.

A couple of other special mentions, firstly to Jean Kirkland for cleaning the library and to Carol Lowden who has taken over this task, to Steve Greaves who has taken on the job of Secretary, to Margaret, Sue and Ellie who run the Coffee Zone every Monday, to Sharon Pattison who has taken on the role of Treasurer and last but by no means least, to Vic Howell who has stepped up to the plate when needed, so thank you all.

I also want to say thank you to Susan Jenkins and Dot Dutton for their past contribution to the library.

The past few months have seen many changes, new committee members and reorganisation of the library, which is still ongoing. I would like to reassure you that these are not changes for changes sake. Our management committee is trying to make the library processes more streamline and ensure that everyone is trained to a high level, hopefully this will make each one of you more comfortable with what we are asking you to do. Changes to the library layout have been made so that we can fully comply with the Disability Act and adhere to Health and Safety Regulations. With that in mind, I would like to advise you that as of 1st January 2024, the library will be operating a NO dogs policy excepting Assistance dogs. The management committee have had to make this decision due to recent happenings in the library. The policy will be reviewed at the same time as all other policies concerning the library. Your help with this is much appreciated.

I want to take some time to acknowledge all our volunteers who help in so many ways – whether that's behind the counter, cleaning, books, coffee morning – so many of these things just happen now, but as a committee we are so appreciative of what you all do.

The continued success of this library is a great achievement and a real credit to you all and the work you put into keeping the library going. You all take a great personal pride and enjoyment in what we are achieving.

As you know I am now the new chair of the library, having served on the library committee for more than a year before this change. I would like to thank you for the support you've given me since I started and hope that going forward, we are going to do great things together.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lorraine Jackson for her many years guiding the library team.

So finally, for all of you whether you are volunteers and/or Friends of the Library we are very grateful for your continued support, and the comments and suggestions that encourage us to keep running the library service and to continually keep reviewing and adding new activities and events.

Marlene Chapman
November 2023