

FRIENDS OF BENSON LIBRARY

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION (CIO)

Registered Number **1176595**

Address: Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, OX10 6LZ

TRUSTEES

Officers:

John Murphy *Chair*

Mary Phillipson *Secretary*

Judith Pignon *Treasurer*

Trustees:

Patrick ('Barry') O'Connor

Anna Malkin

Vivien Gardner

Fiona Thomson-Tur

Christopher Swann

Frances Swann

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The purpose of the Charity continues to be to advance the education of the public by the promotion of a public library service for the residents of Benson and surrounding villages.

We meet these objects by raising funds to provide Oxford County Library Service with a subvention to maintain a library service in Benson, which also benefits residents in surrounding villages. There is considerable residential housebuilding in the area which has led to a significant population increase and increased demand for library services. We also recruit, assist in training of and organise a rota of volunteers to serve as assistants in the library.

The Charity communicates with stakeholders and the general community by means of a website, an online newsletter and a monthly column in the 'Benson Bulletin', the latter being a rich source of local news which is widely distributed in the village and surroundings. Our website has recently been renewed and updated.

In 2020 a long-standing Trustee Kirsty Scott resigned. The CIO remains grateful for her hard work over many years. In the same year we had three treasurers in rapid succession which with the course of the pandemic and lockdowns caused some difficulties. Judith Pignon joined the Trustees as Treasurer in June 2020.

Trustee Mary Phillipson became Secretary to the CIO in November 2019.

Benson Library roof was in a poor state of repair and as a result, major works had to be undertaken. Some of the works took place under Covid 19 restrictions. The library was closed for 9 months of 2020, not reopening until March 2021. Oxford County Council updated the heating, ventilation & other facilities in the library, making it the most environmentally friendly building in our County Library Service property portfolio. It also offers a much-improved working environment for staff and volunteers.

Throughout the period of lockdowns, the CIO continued to recruit volunteers to assist with library service provision. We have directly provided for funds for book purchases, working with Library Manager, Hilary Rust. In this way, the reading interests of the local users are directly reflected in book stock.

The CIO also funds outreach to local schools, including offering book token prizes to encourage reading.

The CIO also sees its role in the wider context of improving Benson Library's environment. We work with Local groups planting fruit and vegetables in the library garden, encouraging local families to enjoy resulting produce free. There is also a plan to involve the local primary school in the development of another part of the garden area.

The CIO has developed a plan to boldly improve the library grounds by providing seating areas, proper buggy and bicycle shelters, create an area for woodland wildflowers and better car parking facilities. The plan is to link what is grown in the garden with books and poetry housed in the library itself. The Charity will apply with the support of Parish, District and County Councils for a share of CIL monies to finance this project.

The CIO is also beginning to work with interested groups on a project to provide a secure place for local archive materials.

During the pandemic the Trustees have been unable to organise regular public fundraising events during 2020. These events will be resumed as soon as is possible. The trustees made a successful effort to make its small lottery more widely supported in the village community. Demands on our finances have been relatively small because of the pandemic and library closure.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The opening balance on the account was £39,249.47 and the closing balance was £37550.61. The 2020 Accounts had to be produced directly from the bank account data due to a loss of some paper records and receipt books. The Trustees are satisfied there are no irregularities although there has been a difficulty in identifying three receipts.

The Trustees have taken further measures to ensure this cannot happen again. They have acquired a new computer which will update directly both to the Cloud and local hard drives. Additionally, all supporting paperwork will be held by both the Treasurer and at each year end another copy with a designated Trustee. These second sets of copies will then be destroyed after each set of annual accounts complete. The Trustees are also reviewing the structure of accounts and devising a manual to go with the CIO function Treasurer function.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

John Murphy
Chair

Mary Phillipson
Secretary