

SOMERSHAM COMMUNITY LIBRARY (FOSL)

MINUTES FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 25th July 2022, 7.00pm

Present: Elsa Evans (Chair), Dawn Cave (Secretary), Denise Grey (Treasurer), Debbie Barrott, Glenda Meakin, Denise Calvert, Lesley Minter, Monica Scobey, Rob Downing, Judith Bullard, Jean Stanton, Yvonne Cooper, Lorraine O'Brien, Sophie Brown, Glen Pasco, Wendy Lowe and Mike Evans

Apologies: Julyan Hunter, Jenny Smith, Ann Pawson, Margaret Byfoot and Barbara Hulme

1. CHAIR'S OPENING ADDRESS

The Chairman of Somersham Community Library, Elsa Evans, welcomed attendees.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were presented on behalf of Anne Pawson, Margaret Barfoot, Jenny Smith and Julyan Hunter.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Chairman briefly summarised the content of the minutes of the previous AGM, copies of which were circulated at the meeting and had been sent to FOSL Members and volunteers in advance of the meeting. The focus of the 2021 AGM had been the Covid-19 pandemic, both the closure and re-opening, and the impact this had had on the library, particularly in terms of finances. Income had been lower but helped by a Business Grant of £10,000 received from central government.

At the 2021 AGM, the financial statements had not been ready, so had been circulated afterwards. The only action had been to signing-off the financial statements.

The minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Elsa advised that for the 2021-2022 year, the main focus has been on recovery from the pandemic period. Initially, the library had only opened for a few sessions each week, as many volunteers and library users were still self isolating. From April

2022, the library had returned to its pre-Covid opening times. There was an issue in terms of volunteers having to be retrained, due to the long break, and in addition there had been a number of things had changed during the Covid phase, especially relating to Spydus and IT systems.

Opportunities for fundraising had been limited until recently, but a number of events, particularly outdoor activities such as a book sale had taken place, and there had also been Easter and Xmas celebrations inside the library. Some community groups had resumed their meetings in the library, such as the Reading Group. Storytime sessions for under 5s had not yet recommenced due to a shortage of volunteers, and volunteers were sought. The Summer Reading Challenge had taken place last year, albeit with reduced numbers, and would be taking place again this year. The Chair gave a special thank you to Lesley for her work in running the Summer Reading Challenge.

Other highlights included:

- The arrangements for the public computers post-Covid were noted, and it was also noted that WiFi was still free within the Library;
- the arrangements for school visits and the junior library project, including the grant funded display equipment. Children were encouraged to borrow books on their school visits, then return them with their parent/guardian, which may encourage further library use in the community;
- For 2021, the number of new library members was higher than pre-Covid, but borrowing rates were not as high as pre-Covid;
- The number of requests had increased, as books could be reserved and collected for free, as the 50p reservation charge was waived. It was noted that the 50p reservation charge still comes up on Spydus as the system covered all the county's libraries and it was a local decision to waive it, and it was confirmed that this was included in the Spydus notes;
- Noted the positive situation for FOSL's finances, but the importance of grants and fundraising. Improving the energy efficiency of the building would be vital, and grants would be needed to facilitate this expenditure;
- The Library enjoyed a good relationship with the County Council's Library Services. In addition to local celebrations, a celebration was being planned across the County for twenty years of community run libraries. The Library Service was changing the name of community run libraries to "Community Managed Libraries" rather than "Library Access Points", but Somersham had changed its name formally to "Somersham Community Library" when it had registered as a Charity in 2012. There were regular meetings between the

community managed libraries, where experience and good practice were shared;

- Library Services had advised about a number of changes to the procedures computer system, which Debbie would be relaying to all Spydus volunteers.
- The Library was also very grateful to the Parish Council for covering utility costs such as electricity, water and phone bills. The Parish Council had set a precept of £3,000 for the library, and any expenditure over that amount would need to be met from the library's own funds. The Board was very conscious about the use of electricity in particular, and had commissioned an energy expert to undertake an energy audit, to identify energy efficiency measures. However, it was vital that library volunteers and visitors were warm enough in the colder months.

In response to a question about other LAPs/Community Libraries, it was noted that most were active and had similar issues as Somersham. There were different governance and management structures, with some fully supported financially by their Parish Councils, some were inside schools, Community Hubs or Parish buildings, and one was a book café. Somersham's opening hours (21.5 hours) significantly exceeded the average of 11-12 hours, some were as low as six hours. Additional Community Libraries were coming on stream, including Brampton and Huntingdon (Oxmoor). Most libraries had two people on duty, and the Board were keen to ensure that this continued at Somersham, as volunteers should not be nervous or uncomfortable.

With regard to Somersham's opening hours, it was noted that some sessions were very quiet, and there had been a conscious decisions made by the Board to have weekend and evening sessions. Filling the rota was always challenging, but fortunately there were few occasions where closure was necessary due to insufficient volunteers.

6. REPORT FROM TREASURER

As reported earlier in the meeting, early on in the pandemic the Library had benefitted from a £10,000 government grant, which had been crucial in sustaining the Library's finances. Currently the Library had approximately £15,000 in its deposit account and around £9,000 in its current account. Grants and fundraising were the key sources of income.

The Library had recently signed up to online banking, and had been considering a card reader for card payments, but this was not yet viable. FOSL membership subscriptions had fallen significantly this year.

Whilst most years the library's income usually marginally exceeded income, this year expenditure was £5,597, and income was £4,366. The £10,000 grant had been a major benefit, although fundraising and donations year on year remained the primary source of income.

In response to a question on major items of expenditure, it was confirmed that these all related to maintaining the building. An Energy Audit had been commissioned to establish ways of minimising energy costs, through actions such as insulation, glazing, etc. Grants may be secured to fund some of these measures, but FOSL's own Reserves may need to be used depending on the size and nature of the expenditure required. It was noted that the County Council owned the building but maintenance was the responsibility of the tenant. The library was not a Listed Building but it was in a Conservation area, so some changes may required Planning Permission.

The accounts for 2021/2022 were not yet available as there had been a delay by the Auditor. It was clarified that there was no problem with the Accounts, it was just that they had not been fully signed off by the Auditor. Those present were requested to agree that as soon as they were available, the Management Committee had a mandate to sign them off. **All present agreed.**

7. RETIREMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS

In accordance with the retirement cycle in the Constitution, one-third of directors have to retire each year at the Annual General Meeting Debbie Barrott had been co-opted by the Board during the year, and was therefore proposed as a Director. Barbara Hulme and Elsa Evans had resigned from the Board. Denise was the longest serving Member, and she confirmed she was willing to be re-elected. In addition, Rob, Lesley, Glenda, Denise Grey, Dawn and Monica were Board Members. Going forward, the Board was short of both a Chairman and Directors, and welcomed proposals or expressions of interest.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to a question, it was confirmed that a lack of volunteers since the Pandemic continued to be an issue. Whilst new volunteers had been recruited, a significant number of previous volunteers had not returned after the Pandemic, having retired/resigned or gone back to work, or returned but with limited availability. The importance of volunteers updating the diary was stressed, as phoning round to check availability to fill gaps was always an issue. There were a number of plans to attract more volunteers, including having a stall at Tesco.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance, and the meeting closed.