



## Friends of Greenhill Library

Registered Charity Number 1158656

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### ANNUAL REPORT TO THE 2021 AGM

This report covers activities to Sept. 2021 and the finances for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The period from April 2020 saw a drastic reduction in our activities because of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are currently (Sept. 2021) seeing a slow return to "normality".

#### **Main Achievements During the Year.**

##### **A) Library Service.**

Since the first national lockdown the library layout has prioritised safety of staff and customers, when admission was possible, i.e a one-way system, screens, quarantining books, masks etc. For large parts of this period only a Click & Collect system could operate, and even that had to be closed at times. From 12/4/21 limited browsing and computer use have resumed; booked sessions for individual families started very successfully. A more normal provision is slowly being restored but a return to opening for 26 hours p.w. is some way off; at present we open for 12 hours p.w. As a stark indicator of the impact of the pandemic on library operation throughout the 2020-2021 year, book issues for our "yellow sticker" stock were just 1,938 compared to 11,110 for the previous year.

Disruption was particularly frustrating in respect of our sub-branch library in the Lowedges Community Centre, which had started very well on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 only to close again as the pandemic hit five weeks later. Re-opening there was not possible but the opportunity was taken in March 2021 to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Terminus Initiative to move the library into the better located Meeting Place (formerly the "Terminus Café"). After our volunteers helped with redecoration, we opened on 19/5/21 for two days a week; again we had an encouraging start with 27 new library registrations by early July. Funding is being sought from "Reaching Communities" to support the project for a further 3 years.

There was no Summer Reading Challenge for children in 2020 but Clive Opie led our involvement in the local Sheffield scheme this summer. A total of 114 children (75 girls, 35 boys) registered and 45% completed the challenge. These are well down on the 2019 figures but obviously a big improvement from 2020. Encouragingly, the Lowedges library registered 15 children with a 67% completion rate.

All our provision of library services is led by Ann Hartley, who works tirelessly with session leaders, library assistants and volunteers handling book donations. Some have been added to our shelves and Ann has continued to buy new books; for this we are grateful for a £2,000 book grant from Sheffield City Council and for gifts in memory of volunteers, John Jeffcock and Patrick Coghlan. We are still continuing to sell the books we cannot add to the library catalogue via the library bookshop and online via World of Books. All the other books which are not fit for use go to a company called Revival books, who try to find a second life for as many books as possible; they also work with a recycling partner to recycle any books they cannot use and these books are pulped for ongoing use. All of these outlets bring us in a steady income.

## **B) Community Outreach & New Activities.**

Our **strategic objective** is to grow outreach into our community and new activities. These would be to fulfil our mission “to work with local residents, groups and organisations to promote other educational, cultural, recreational and social activities that respond to their needs and contribute to community cohesion and development”.

Activities have been limited to outdoors or on-line in the last year. Planned events, such as another children’s Music Day and a Wizard of Oz day have been postponed.

- Whilst it has not been possible to continue with **Chatterbooks, Story Time and Fun Time** sessions in the library, some story walks have been set up in Greenhill and Lowedges – pages of children’s books on boards on a number of nearby streets. Booked story-telling sessions on the library lawn have been very popular.
- Some monthly evening talks have been given on Zoom, with volunteers from the other Associate Libraries also invited.
- A play-reading group continued on-line for part of the year; it is hoped to resume, when meetings in the library are possible.
- Open Gardens events in Sept. 2020 and July 2021 have been very successful; we are very grateful to all opening their gardens and to the visitors, whose contributions were our main fundraising this year.
- Scarecrow Competitions in August 2020 and 2021 also gave good cheer at an otherwise sombre time.

We continue to post on Facebook, our page is followed by over 1100 people. Due to the severely restricted events program our usual tri-annual printed newsletter has not been published, although shorter newsletters were distributed to around 4,000 people in August 2020 and September 2021. The monthly e-newsletter continues to go out to a slowly growing number of people, currently just over 300.

To show our determination to resume community outreach, we bought a new PA system for story-telling and other events, acquired a card-reader for debit card bookings and have set up an on-line booking system. The trustees have also

designated £20,000 of our reserves as an Events Fund to subsidise events through which to re-engage the community.

### **C) Organisation & People.**

Our **strategic objective** is to maintain a workforce of volunteers with the skills, capacity and motivation to operate the library to the same standard as those operated professionally, and to provide a high-quality offering of community events.

**At present we have 166 members**, of whom 135 are registered as volunteers, 1 is an employee, Lucy Booth, and 30 are Friends contributing at least £20 p.a. In practice only Lucy and around 50 volunteers, including the trustees, are active. Loss of volunteers, particularly session leaders (either due to concerns over covid risks or simply due to “moving on”) continues to be a challenge, as does the retraining of those who have returned after a long absence. It is not yet known how many will ultimately return to volunteering for us.

#### **Trustees**

Chris Brown:	Chair
Laurence Coates:	Secretary; also Acting Treasurer from March 2021
Mick Black:	Volunteer Coordinator
Ann Hartley:	Operations Manager
Richard Brown, Wendy Crookes, Janet Crowther.	
Kirsty and Peter Atkin (both from Oct. 2020).	

**Ex-Trustees:** David Wildgoose (Treasurer to Oct. 2020)

David Billington (Treasurer from Oct. 2020 to March 2021).

**Trustees are elected**, usually for a period of 3 years, by the membership of the Friends of Greenhill Library. They meet monthly and review FROGL’s policies and procedures on a regular basis. We are highly indebted to David Wildgoose for his work as Treasurer from 2014. It was very sad that ill health led to David Billington’s early resignation.

Volunteers can access the minutes, policies and procedures on the Three Rings website. Members and library users may also consult them in the library on request.

### **D) Finance for the year ending 31/3/2021.**

Our **strategic objective** is to maintain financial sustainability with multiple diverse funding streams.

This objective is being achieved; details are in our Plan, which was recently updated, and in the annual accounts. Receipts in 2020-21 were £104,361 (2019-20 £71,767) and Payments £30,854 (2019-20 £49,269) giving a surplus on the year of £73,507 (2019-20 £22,498). We are grateful to Sheffield City Council for their annual grant as well as for the support of their libraries staff. Since the first lockdown fundraising has been mainly limited to book sales on the grass, sales of some donated books and proceeds from the Open Gardens event. The total raised was £2,410 compared to

£27,452 the previous year. However, whilst there have been new costs for equipment and sanitiser to reduce infection risks, no Council tax was payable, running costs were reduced and we received government business support grants of £39,143 through Sheffield City Council.

**Reserves Policy.** On 31/3/21 we carried forward funds of £203,736, of which most are unrestricted reserves. The trustees' policy is to keep unrestricted reserves of between 3 to 6 months of normal unrestricted expenditure (i.e. between about £7,000 and £14,000) but also to designate funds for significant matters. The fund for major repairs is now £21,600. £50,000 has been designated for our Building Development plans (see E below). £20,000 has been designated to fund community events over the years. During the year some reserves were invested in interest-bearing accounts with the Charity Bank and the Hampshire Trust Bank.

### **E) Building.**

Our **strategic objective** is to have a fit for purpose and developing building.

We continue to be indebted to Rob Goodrum, buildings manager, and his team of handypersons and to Linda Stevenson and team of cleaners for their constant attention to maintenance, painting, cleaning and health and safety in the library during this most difficult of years. Graffiti was a problem but has recently mysteriously disappeared!

We continue to move forward slowly with our plans for building development and our architects, Burnell Briercliffe, helped us gain Planning Permission and Building Regulations approval last year for improvements to toilet and kitchen facilities, a new community room, lettable offices, an extended area for very young children and a storage room. The ancient gas burner is to be replaced by air-source heat pumps; this work is entirely funded by an award from Viridor and has now started after a long delay in obtaining Landlord's consent. All the changes are important to create a financially sustainable community resource. Fundraising for the remaining developments is very much a work in progress.

**Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees**



Chris Brown (Chair of Trustees) Date: Sept. 2021