

Report for Library AGM

from: Library lead for Liaison and engagement (community)

1. Overview - by far and away the main achievement to celebrate is, I think, the way that we have created a space that is welcoming, open, with colour and a sense that we are one organisation in one shared space. We have a little tweaking to do on space management and furniture, but the building now feels like a shared community space in a way that was not so apparent before.

2. Liaison and engagement

The range of activities taking place within the Library has grown extensively with:

2.1 New groups making use of the space during opening hours, for example
The Home/School Group - a rapidly developing and successful initiative that has very quickly found its role in supporting a large number of parents engaged in home schooling.

NHS Social Prescribing - a recent development to try to develop reach-out for professional support for those referred to the Social Prescribing team by their surgery, but who would benefit from a non-medical environment for its delivery.

The crafting group 'pleasant pastimes' adopted us as their new 'home', we welcome them fortnightly on Thursdays.

Last summer we had a short series of poetry readings - the 'Pop-up Poetry' sessions at which a guest poet gave a 20 minute reading towards the end of a Saturday morning. There are more poets out there ready to come along, expect to see some more poetry popping up.

2.2 Out of hour bookings of the library continue to grow. One of the main developments in the last year has been engagement with 'Live & Local' with two sell-out performances early in 2025. This is something that will be continued next season, concentrating on 'spoken word' events. Both performances were very well received. The second was an exceptional piece of solo storytelling that was a privilege to host.

Otherwise the building continues to be used by a wide range of groups, from language classes, book groups, the repair cafe, murder-mystery evenings, Sheep Dip Sessions, folk choir rehearsals, occasional Theatre Group rehearsals, as a base during 'Open Gardens' and will host the tour groups for VE celebration tours of the village this summer put on by Harbury Heritage Centre.

2.2 Engaging with the youngest members of our community:

(i) The pre-school continue to visit weekly for storytime with us. In addition, Banana Moon Nursery have recently started visiting fortnightly for a storytime session.

(ii). School age children:

(a) Thanks to key volunteers, we continue to offer craft sessions during the school holidays, with structured and well supported activities.

Also, there have been a number of new initiatives around story-telling (after all, books are engines for the imagination):

- (a) story-writing challenge during the Library shut-down for the heating works. This led to the submission of 18 short stories, prizes were awarded and each entrant received a biro with the inscription - 'Harbury Writers'.
- (b) story-telling workshop in spring half term at which half a dozen children produced their own stories (in some cases multiple stories) and then read them out to the group.
- (c) story-telling workshop with Year 3 at Harbury Primary School on World Book Day, that produced a classroom of story-tellers eager to come to the front of the class at the end of session and tell their stories.
- (d) We are currently planning a story-telling evening for World Book Night on 23 April, watch this space.

2.3. The 'Threads Project'

This project has involved a lot of planning, design, consultation and discussion, but we now have a design and are ready to go. In addition, we have secured sponsorship from local businesses: Alsters Kelly, Southam Carpets and the Co-op Helping Hearts scheme, with a further local application in the pipeline.

The data is in, the design in place and with about a dozen needle-handlers ready to go. We are about to start work. The design includes elements that can be made, with support, by children at the village school and we will run a session or two there for that purpose.

3. Going forward

3.1. A key goal is to increase our engagement with school age children, especially with the primary school. We are exploring ways of developing the good contacts we already have. Recent engagements have been very successful, but there is more work to be done.