

Background

The Swindon Community Library Trust was setup to manage community libraries that Swindon Borough Council proposed to close in summer 2016. Approved by the Charity Commission in January 2017, the Trust was successful in securing Covingham Library and Liden Library and took them over from September 2017. The end of the first financial year is March 2018. The accounts will be published by the Charity Commission shortly. The legal requirement is ten months after the financial year end but it will be sooner than that. The accounts will be publicly available for anyone to view. There is a limited amount of useful information in those accounts since it will follow the legal framework so this letter aims to provide a lot more detail, detail which I hope you will find enlightening.

The Trust's business plan has successfully completed its first year, and in many ways been exceeded ahead of time. The Trust is within £10,000 per year of its 2022 target. However this final £10,000 is proving tricky to obtain.

The Trust has received £0 revenue support and £00 capital grant from Swindon Borough Council but this will change after April 2018. £40,000 comprised of £18,537 revenue support and £21,463 for direct SBC staff costs. The revenue support ends in April 2019. The £70,000 was split between both Libraries to assist in cutting costs through capital changes and refurbishment to ensure the Libraries are sustainable. £50,000 for Liden and £20,000 for Covingham.

The Covingham capital funding remains allocated and is unspent.

Our plans for Covingham Library for a new exterior door await a decision of the Anglican Diocese. Our expectation is a positive decision by the time of your next Parish meeting.

Work has therefore focused on Liden Library in recent months. If you have not visited recently, please do visit to see the positive impact made. The Library has been opened up, a community café has been installed, improvements to the disabled facilities implemented and introduction of the Open+ technology to provide extended self-service hours is complete.

The 2016 cost for Swindon Borough Council running the two Libraries was £120,190, and the Trust is on course to achieve an equivalent cost of £42,572 – a reduction of over 60% in running costs.

As a charity, we have secured 100% business rate relief which Parish Councils are not eligible for. A saving of £15,000 for Covingham Library and Liden Library.

Current budget projections are predicting a balanced budget for 18/19, due to the revenue grant from Swindon Council. This needs to be replaced and the target is additional annual income of £10,000 to achieve sustainability. Our aim is to achieve this is through additional fundraising, applying for other community grants and hopefully a discussion on increasing the Parish grants.

An annual general meeting in March 2018 approved the 2017/18 budget, and all targets are on course to be achieved or exceeded within the financial year. The Covingham chairman attended the meeting, and there remains an open invitation for a Trustee to be nominated.

The Trust has a monthly meeting to share current progress with the volunteers and Friends of Covingham Library group.

Kevin Parry was the Nythe, Eldene, Liden Parish nomination to the Trust, and he resigned in September 2018 to focus on his Swindon Borough Council mayoral responsibilities. Discussions are occurring on a replacement. However a recruitment exercise has seen two more Trustees join the

board. The increase in the number of Trustees will allow the Trust to mature its governance and improve communications.

Covingham Library highlights

A summer Beer Festival was organised between the Church and Library Volunteers. This was attended by over 300 people, and raised £2,000 that was split evenly between the Church and Library Trust. More people would have attended if it wasn't for Stratton Parish Council deciding to reschedule the Stratton Stroll to the same day after the Trust announced its plans. With a track record now, we hope 2019 will be even better!

The established Friends of Covingham Library group continue to support the Library, and are contributing £2,000 to the cost of a librarian on a Wednesday.

Fundraising events happen every quarter. The September Friends craft fayre raised £360. The Trust organised a stand at the Wanborough show to help promote activities and sell books, raising over £100. These are all adding up but are demonstrating that Covingham Library by itself will struggle to cover all its costs.

The introduction of Open+ is planned for Covingham, but is delayed due to the Anglican Diocese permissions. The plans involve removing a single floor to ceiling window, installing a new automatic exterior door, and upgrading the current interior door to the Church. Open+ will be installed on the door, and will allow access to the Library for all hours where staff are not available. Entry will not be reliant on using the main Church doors and key holders. Quotes have been obtained, and everything is lined up ready for the green light! Approval by the Diocese will mean opening hours of 8am to 8pm 7 days a week can be supported, with designated hours for staff and volunteers to be present. For example, Volunteers are already ready to support Friday afternoons so we are close but not quite there yet.

The Trust has secured a defibrillator from the British Heart Foundation which will shortly be installed on the side of St Pauls Church, near the Library/Bus Shelter side. This will include three monthly CPR training events for local residents and Library volunteers.

More generally, a Library lotto has been launched (50% of ticket sales in prizes, 50% to the Libraries). The first draw takes place before Christmas.

Positive progress being made by the Library Trust has led to more recognition, and filming by the BBC three times in the last six months within Covingham Library.

The Trust is developing a Duke of Edinburgh initiative to support young adults wishing to work with Libraries for their Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. The pilot will be in Covingham.

Story time for children has been restored.

Everything is not perfect, and the Trust is aware of a number of necessary improvements needed in Covingham Library, from a coat of paint, refurbishment of the carpet tiles, secure cupboards and other expenditure. These will all happen with time but have been delayed because of the strict focus on controlling the spending of money and wishing to see building work finished before refurbishment.

Liden Library highlights

A Community Café, in partnership with the charity Open Door, was launched on Monday 22nd October. The soft launch has increased Liden Library opening hours from the staffed 10 hours over 2 days per week to 18 hours over 3 days per week (10 hours staffed, with 8 hours self-service). From January 2019, the expectation is 40 hours over 5 days per week (10 hours staffed and 30 hours self-service). The Trust will consult on weekend opening hours in the New Year.

Open+ from Bibliotheca was installed on Tuesday 13th November, and will mean that Liden has the potential to have the same extended opening hours as the Swindon Core libraries. 8am to 8pm 7 days per week.

The benefit of Open+ includes the ability to rent out the Library space for evening and weekend events without a key holder needing to be present. This will be crucial for income generation in 2019.

The first two Library card holders registered to use Open+ have been two Police Officers. This will allow them to work within Liden Library and use it as a local base between patrols.

A Self-service RFID point remains operational. This follows agreement for the Trust to pay for the CISCO VPN equipment, and covered the SBC Support and Maintenance costs to allow secure encrypted traffic to the SBC Library Management System.

Monthly “meet the author” events have been successfully running since February 2018, with forward planning of 3 months.

There are now over 20 Volunteers in Liden Library, and the focus is on specific skills and roles rather than simply numbers of people. The Librarian co-ordinates volunteer activities.

The Library Trust has secured a place on Tesco’s Bags of Helps store scheme. Between 1st November to 31st December, shoppers can vote for the Library Trust towards the café project. Results are announced at the end of January 2019, with 1st place receiving £4,000, 2nd place £2,000 and 3rd place £1,000.

Budget Overview