

Statement from the Chair of Friends of Arbury Court Library

I am a volunteer at Arbury Court Library, as well as being involved with the Friends group. This is useful to keep aware of the pressures on the library staff and to be aware of any issues arising for the library users. The introduction of fees to use the library computers caused much upset but fortunately that was rectified quite speedily.

I have been involved with the Friends group since 2013 and fund-raising is my main role. We usually hold a book sale each month to ensure that we have enough funds to be able to start a campaign if the Library Service does come under threat of cuts to services.

We have been involved with the King's Hedges Brownie pack who have been working on the library garden to earn their Gardening badges. We have held two thank-you events when the Brownies have been at the library for a party to celebrate their hard work, and also on one occasion to meet Gerri Bird, the then Mayor, who talked about her year as Mayor and how she first became a councillor.

During the long hot summer school holidays we set up a free table outside the library, with some of the excess donations we had in the cupboards, due to not being able to fundraise for two years because of Covid. This was appreciated by local residents who mostly did not use the library to borrow books etc. This could be due to worry about not getting books on time (book loans are for 21 days), or not having returned a book (often quite a while ago). Sometimes the lack of documents or having to dig them out is a problem. It is often much easier to know that the items are yours and don't have to be returned.

Hopefully by setting up the table and staffing it with members of Friends of Arbury Library, displaying all sorts of 'left behind' items or donations we did provide Arbury & Kings Hedges children and young people with something to do during the holidays. The response was positive from the parents! Adults enjoyed it too. Sometimes just rummaging around amongst 'odds and sods' is part of the fun in itself.

The Friends always support Arbury Carnival in June each year. Due to lack of volunteers this year we had a tombola and book sale at the library during the Carnival. We saved on the stall fee but did not raise as much money as we usually do at the Carnival. We will have to be more organised for 2023. Residents of Arbury who would like to become involved, please be in touch.

We plan to have a December Social this year. The last one was several years ago. It was very enjoyable with wine, cheese and Christmas treats. A decorated jumper competition and lots of Christmas cheer. Hopefully we can keep the standard up this year. Do look out for notices and if you would like to help with this event, please let us know.

We have held a Christmas food tasting event after Story Time for the parents and children. We asked all the parents to make a label with the type of celebration message for their country at this time of year and made a display of all the greetings. This was a truly multicultural event, with messages from all around the world in many, many languages and celebrating many different visions of the festive season.

We have celebrated Chinese New Year and the Autumn Moon Festival with the help of Shully, one of our library assistants.

The Friends are willing to support any ideas from members of the local community and to offer help and funding where we can. A 'Reading Allowed' group for adults with learning disabilities was started at Arbury but was not very well attended. It moved to Central where it is easier for people to get to with alternative transport methods.

We do feel that we are supporting Arbury Court Library and the local residents and will do so to the best of our ability. Do join us if you would like to help – or come with new ideas!