

Appendix 1

Fair Oak Community Library

(if that is what we want to call it)

Preliminary considerations for setting up the new library

Arrangements with HCC

1 HCC looks favourably on transferring the property and its fittings (especially bookshelves) to the parish council or a community organisation for community use. It accepts that the use could be wider than the provision of a library. But it wishes to be relieved of all costs of maintaining the property.

2 It will

transfer the current stock of books to the community library;

adapt the current ordering system to allow the community library to order and borrow books for library members; and

lend about 100 books to the library for three months at a time. (This is an existing service that they provide to care homes).

But otherwise it will not help maintain a stock of library books. (It currently spends about £9,000 pa on books for FO library).

3 It will not provide any IT whether for running the library or permitting residents to use the Library Service's existing access arrangements.

4 It will provide limited support during a transitional period, expected to be between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021, including

some expertise and information such as details of current stock and, subject to GDPR, current library users;

a grant of not more than £10,000 to cover transitional costs; and

limited help running the library during the transitional period

Matters for Consideration.

We will need to consider and make decisions about several features of our library. I have tried to identify them and indicate some of the matters that we need to address. We will need to consider each of these matters and decide how to handle them

We should be able to get some help from the County library service which has prepared a memo outlining its considerations for interested organisations. A copy is

attached. It includes several references and links to other organisations that provide information and, sometimes, assistance as well.

1 Books

Three sources of books are proposed

A The current stock. There are no proposals for refreshing it. So, unless something is done it can be expected to decline in both quality and numbers.

Are we going to refresh it? If so how? Will we ask for donations from the public? Can we purchase enough books and, if so, how do we get the money and how do we choose the books?

Most importantly how do we manage the loans of books to users? Some libraries don't bother to monitor who takes what, trusting users to return what they have borrowed. They lose a lot of books. An alternative model is a book exchange where a user contributes a book when borrowing one from the library. The library usually gets the worst of each exchange. The traditional model of requiring each borrower to return the books they have borrowed requires a bigger infrastructure for the library. It will have to register and label each book, register all users, and record who has borrowed what. It won't need a structure as complicated as the County's but it would be similar to what they do in schools

B The additional supply of 100 books for three months. County Cllr Mike Thornton is trying to persuade the Library Service to increase this number, but it won't be a huge supply. These will have to be returned to the library service at the end of each three-month loan period. So we have to ensure that we know who has borrowed them and try to persuade them to return the books on time so that we can get them back to the County Library. We also need to establish the terms on which the books are lent to us. Who chooses them, how are they got from the County to us? Some will inevitably be lost and/or returned late. Is there any sanction when that happens?

C Books ordered from the Library Service. This is part of the standard library reservations service but amended so that users can collect and return the County's books through the community library. We need to be clear what happens. Does the user have a direct agreement with the County? In that case is the community library simply an agent of one or both of those two. Alternatively is the community library the borrower from the County and lender to the user and what happens when the user doesn't return the book and /or returns it late? Other arrangements are possible. We will need to see what risks the community library will be exposed to and how they can be managed

2 Volunteers

The community library will have to be established, managed and run by volunteers. The management of volunteers will probably be the most important aspect of running

the library. If we can get that right, the rest will fall into place; or rather be pushed there by the volunteers.

This includes the recruitment, training, safeguarding and support of the volunteers, staff governance and managing a rota to cover opening hours.

Recruitment is currently haphazard depending on a few facebook calls. I hope to add some publicity in the library shortly. We need to find ways of extending the range of people who know we need them. The NCVO provides some relevant guidance

Training volunteers will be key. They must know what we want them to do when they are staffing the library so they must be made familiar with all day to day processes. This will include training on whatever IT system we adopt, procedures for lending books and possibly how we intend to move books to/from the County library We will have to ensure that they have the appropriate training to ensure that the library complies with legal obligations including those relating to safeguarding, health and safety and data protection They also need to know what to do if something goes wrong. The County Council has a process for training volunteers which should be considered

I hope it includes guidance on the safeguarding and support of volunteers. I know little about the technicalities, but I expect that the parish and county councils have procedures which may be helpful. I also suspect that, in practice, it is very much a matter of personal relations.

I believe that staff governance can be managed by adapting the rules that apply to parish council staff. The County Council will have something similar for its volunteers. We will need to review and adapt these to meet our needs.

Clearly the library wont function without staff. I expect that we will need at least two volunteers present when the library is open. We will need to have a system to ensure that enough volunteers are available. My experience of this sort of thing is that it will entail herding cats. Volunteers will cry off unexpectedly and some way of plugging gaps will be needed. We need to find a saint to manage this

3 IT

The computers and programmes that we will need will depend on what we decide to do. If we decide on a book exchange, we will not need to monitor the library's books. But we will need some computer system to manage the library and keep records. It may include managing books, training systems for staff, management of the rota, probably with remote access for volunteers, lists of users and so on.

The computer system will have to include ways of liaising with the County library to order /return books both through the customer ordering system and the bulk loans of 100 books or multiples thereof.

The library service has suggested a free open source library management system called koha. (There is a link on the attached note on Independent Community

Libraries prepared by the Library service.) It has also offered to provide information on systems used in schools, which may be just what we want.

We will also need to consider whether we will allow public access to a computer for the users own purposes. It has been a feature of public libraries over recent years but I am not at all sure about the level of use. Also finding enough suitable computers may be a problem

I understand that computer systems need support and so we will have to adopt suitable arrangements

4 Property

Clearly the community library won't be able to function without access to suitable premises. Initially the current library is the only option. The County Council is minded to transfer it. But quite how and to whom is less clear.

The parish council wants to ensure that the property is available for community use for ever. It is conscious that this is the only building available for community use in the centre of the village. Its concern is that the library could fail, in which event there is a risk that the property could be sold to satisfy the library's creditors or transferred to other charities on the winding up of a charity. Neither would ensure that the property stays in community use

So, it wishes the building to be transferred to it and it would let/ licence it to the library at a peppercorn rent. The lease/licence would end if the library ceased to function. So essentially the library gets use of the property on the basis that it pays the outgoings.

These will need to be identified and quantified. They will include utility bills and service contracts. (I hope we can avoid the cost of rates by obtaining charitable status) The library service has provided some information and is preparing a schedule of the condition of the building which they will send to us.

5 Finance

Clearly money is going to be needed. There will be expenses in running a library even if run on a shoestring. There is a cost to everything, even volunteers whose training and support will cost money. So, we need to identify what those costs will be and try and quantify them. Some help can be provided by the library service which knows what the current library costs them.

We will also need to find a way of covering those costs. So, fundraising will be key. Donations can be sought. If charitable status is obtained, we will be able to recover some tax on donations. Some income can be generated by the library. Gov UK has links to advice and guidance on income generation. We will need to evolve a fund-raising plan which will be critical to the success of the library

Finally, we need to be able to account for monies received and paid. I don't think that it need be very sophisticated, but it will need to be sufficiently robust to ensure that we can meet all accounting obligations. Moreover, credible financial projections will be needed to convince potential backers that it is a sustainable project

6 Identity

I don't think that it is sensible to run a community project as an unstructured group of individuals. It makes it very difficult to make decisions and individuals could become personally liable for some of its debts. So, I think that we need to establish and act through some form of corporate body.

That body should have-:

- legal personality so that it can act itself and not through individuals;
- limited liability to protect individuals involved in the project from personal liability;
- a clear management structure so that decisions binding the body can be made;
- an acceptable way of selecting the managers of the organisation; and
- a name.

We also need to decide whether it should have charitable status which brings some financial advantages at the cost of tighter regulation.

7 Communications

The library will need to have good ways of communicating with the public, library users and volunteers. As I only recently retired my quill pen, I will leave this aspect to others

8 Legal Issues

Even though this will be a "not for profit" organisation, we will need to comply with a number of legal requirements and secure ourselves against a number of risks. They should be identified when considering the above matters, but several occur to me immediately:

- safeguarding library users (young and old)
- the health and safety of volunteers
- data protection both of users and volunteers
- public liability insurance
- public lending rights (probably exempt as outside the statutory library service)
- building insurance including cover for occupier's liability
- contents insurance
- employer's liability insurance re volunteers

9 Other uses for the library

One of the most important features of a community library is the use of the library by the community. So community events like Knit and Natter and Baby Rhymes Times

are important. Unfortunately, they have been killed by the Coronavirus crisis which looks as if it will continue for some months yet

But at some point, we will emerge from the current restrictions and will need to restore such meetings and hopefully expand the range and number of community meetings. So it can't be an immediate priority but any plan should include arrangements for community provision in the library