

FRIENDS OF CROSSWAYS LIBRARY REPORT – FEBRUARY 24TH 2011

The Read-in was a success with over 115 people turning up on the day. We were lucky to have 'George' who read two stories for us and our MP Richard Drax came along to give his support and listen to our concerns. He pledged his support to our campaign and stressed the importance of everyone sending individual letters to all the people listed below. He also said he is very happy to hear the views of constituents. The Read-in showed that it is not just Crossways residents affected by the potential closure as people from Moreton, Osmington, Owermoigne, and Warmwell turned up to add their voice to the protest. Well done to all who turned up, people power can work!

1. We took the opportunity to launch a recruitment campaign for members of the Friends of Crossways Library with people happily signing up with their £1 fee. As we currently have no financial backing the membership fees will provide support for the administration costs of telephone calls, paper for posters etc. Posters will be displayed around all the local villages telling people how they can join. At the first meeting of the group last night 23rd February the Friends group was formalised with a Committee being elected and a Constitution adopted. Dorset County Library Service has been informed and will be adding Crossways Library to the list on their website. A full list of Committee members is available at the Library.
2. Julian Fellowes has agreed to be patron of **AdLib** and will be supporting the campaign as he did last time when saving Crossways Library.
3. A complaint about the way in which Dorset County Council are managing the situation was made to the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council and their Regional team has met with officers of the Library Service. They say that 'MLA is concerned about proposals for libraries in Dorset and elsewhere and is paying close attention to developments across the Country. Ultimately however the decisions will be made by Local Authorities. We are working to influence those decisions before they are finalized...'. They also said that they had discussed ways in which other councils were managing potential cuts to their library service and had given advice and recommendations on other alternatives. It was stressed that Ed Vaizey the Secretary of State with responsibility for the libraries has no current plans to ask for amendments to the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to enable library users to pay to withdraw books. The full letter is available from Liz on request.
4. Another member of **AdLib** has spoken with Oliver Letwin the MP for that area who reported on his discussions with senior officers of the Library service which leads our colleague to be optimistic that a better deal will be on the table for the 20 libraries concerned.
5. There was a large turnout for the demonstration at County Hall on Thursday 17th February and it was shown on National TV and broadcast on all local radio stations. **AdLib** gave an excellent presentation to the full County Council Meeting which resulted in the decision that full consultation will be made with communities and account must be taken of the figures presented by **AdLib**. The proposals submitted by **AdLib** demonstrate that there is no necessity to close any of the 34 libraries and show how significant savings can be made by reducing all library opening hours by 10%, except those that only open for 10 hours or less such as Crossways, further reducing HQ staffing by 10% and the Book Fund by 40%. An invitation has been given for two members of **AdLib** to attend the Policy Development Panel at their meeting on March 1st.

Future plans:

1. The Friends group will continue to actively encourage library users, members of all the Parish Councils to write letters or e-mails of protest to one or all of the following
 - David Jenkins, CEO Dorset County Council. e-mail: chiefexecutive@dorsetcc.gov.uk
 - Tracy Long, Library Services Manager. e-mail: t.long@dorsetcc.gov.uk
 - Councillor David Crowhurst, Chairman of the Policy Development Panel and your local County Councillor. d.crowhurst@dorsetcc.gov.uk
 - This e-mail address where views are being collated libraryreview@dorsetcc.gov.uk
 - Councillor Mike Lovell, Chairman of the Community Overview Committee responsible for considering the proposals and submitting recommendations to the full DCC Cabinet e-mail: m.w.lovell@dorsetcc.gov.uk
 - Dorset Evening Echo
2. Recruitment of new 'Friends' will continue. The newly formed Committee will meet in the near future to consider their strategy and write as a group to all those listed above to encourage them to use the **AdLib** proposals as the way to ensure the future of the Dorset Library Service.

3. We are trying to resolve the problems of the Library Service providing the training for the volunteers for Crossways now as we know they are going ahead with training other volunteers at Puddletown Library. We hope for an early resolution to the situation.
4. The consultation process is due to start on March 1st and it would seem eminently sensible to canvas the views of residents, library users and Parish Councils who live in the Crossways Library catchment area as soon as possible. At this stage it is unclear as to how the consultation will happen but we have received information that some Parish Councils have already been contacted with regard to consultation so has this been the case with Crossways PC? Also there had been a paper circulated last year to PCs asking for their response to five questions. Has Crossways PC received this?
Returning to the issue of canvassing the views of the community, the proposals presented by DCC Library Service give three options all of which need to be considered and discussed before anyone can give a response to the consultants. The options are:
 - Option a)** Local communities take ownership of their local library service. This would include responsibility for the library building to provide a library service and wider community use.
 - Option b)** The County Council provides a mobile library visit. This will provide a regular visit at a fixed time on a timetable.
 - Option c)** Local councils fund library service provision for their local area.

The FCL are now reviewing the statistics used in the report and researching the actual costs to DCC as the criteria used to determine which of the 20 libraries is under threat is seriously flawed. A list of the criteria was read out. It is clear from discussions locally and with AdLib that none of the options are viable so the County would lose all 20 libraries. The Friends of Crossways have very little in the way of funds so it would be helpful if Crossways PC would consider funding a public meeting with possible contributions from the other PCs. Costs would include the hire of premises and the printing of a notice to attend the meeting for each household. FCL can provide the necessary posters, manage the publicity required plus undertake the administration involved. We are researching the costs of premises in Crossways and it may be that we can find a venue free of charge or at a reduced rate.

5. In conclusion, FCL have discovered that it is vital that Parish and Town Councils are engaged with the whole process and we urge Crossways Parish Council to join with us in the campaign.

Thank you for your attention.

Liz Callister
Chairman of the Friends of Crossways Library
24th February 2011