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CROWN STREET LIBRARY TRUSTEE BOARD

Thursday, 19 October 2023

PRESENT – Councillor Harker, Elizabeth Dodds and Yvonne Richardson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Mike Crawshaw (Head of Heritage and Culture), Suzy Hill (Library Manager), Luke Swinhoe (Assistant Director Law and Governance) and Lynne Wood (Elections Manager)

6 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

IT WAS AGREED – That Councillor Harker be appointed as Chair of the Crown Street Library Trustee Board Meeting for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

7 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed the Trustees, proposed Trustee and Officers in attendance to the fourth meeting of the Crown Street Library Trustee Board.

8 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THIS BOARD HELD ON :-

IT WAS AGREED – That the Minutes of the meetings of this Board held on 19 October 2022 and 3 July 2023, be approved, as a correct record.

9 UPDATE ON THE RECRUITMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT TRUSTEE TO FILL A VACANCY

A Trustee informed the Board of the process undertaken to recruit a replacement Trustee to sit on the Board. It was reported that there had been an exceptional response to the advertisement and that six people had been shortlisted and invited to attend for interview on 28 September 2023, all of which had the appropriate skills and talent to undertake the role.

IT WAS AGREED – That the process be noted.

10 APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT INDEPENDENT TRUSTEE

Pursuant to Minute 9 above, it was reported that the preferred candidate to fill the vacancy of Trustee on the Board was Steve Rose.

IT WAS AGREED – That Steve Rose be appointed to fill the vacancy of Trustee on this Board.

11 RESTORATION AND REFURBISHMENT OF DARLINGTON (CROWN STREET) LIBRARY

The Library Manager gave a presentation to the Board on the restoration and refurbishment of Darlington (Crown Street) Library.

It was reported that the library originally opened in 1895 with a later extension being added

in 1933. The library has been fully restored and refurbished and had re-opened its doors to the public again in September 2023. Prior to the refurbishment commencing two public consultations had been undertaken, in order to gauge the public's views on the refurbishment and enable a brief to be established.

The main drivers for the restoration was the heritage of the building, making it accessible and increasing the digital offer. The changes included increased light throughout the building; introduction of feature lighting; replastering and redecoration throughout the building; restoration of the 'listed' woodwork; restoration of the foyer; installation of toilets and baby changing facilities; restoring the original colours, as far as possible; cleaning and restoration of glasswork; pigeon proofing the roof; installation of new PC's and the provision of areas for people to bring in their own devices; provision of a search station; and the installation of CCTV.

Before and after photos of each of the areas were displayed at the meeting including the Adult and Children's Libraries; the Reference Library which had been rebranded to the Study; the e-Library which had been rebranded the Hive; the Centre for Local Studies; the foyer; the reading room which had been rebranded the Reminiscence Room and providing a quiet / safe space for older people and / or those with dementia; and the training rooms which had been rebranded as the Hoskins Room. Particular references were made to the Hoskins Room, which was a hireable space and to the Hive, which had a number of new facilities including 30 laptops, virtual reality headsets, 3D printer and sewing machines. The Hive was an area that schools liked to visit.

It was reported that the refurbishment was encouraging people to linger in the building longer; the library was 'family friendly'; although not branded as such, it was a 'warm space' that people could use; as the demand for the reference library had declined non-fiction had been upgraded and relocated into the study together with 10 PC's; and that additional stock was stored in the basement and was searchable via the newly incorporated 'search station'.

Reference was made to the re-opening of the library on 9 September 2023 and the activities that took place during the day and the number of visitors during the first week of opening.

The library was more than just books and the other services that are on offer include study space and research resources; school support; baby and pre-school activities; weekend activities for children; free book packs to support families and educational settings; holiday programme for school children; adult workshops; digital offer; home delivery service; and a space and resource to support older people and those with dementia.

Discussion ensued on security and the balance of keeping the building and equipment secure but accessible; the number of members and books borrowed; relationships with schools to ensure making good use of resources; the work of the staff before, during and after the restoration; and the website.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the thanks of the Board be conveyed to the staff.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Reference was made to the plans for the future investment and maintenance of the library; attendance by the public at the meeting; promotion of the meetings; and to the anniversary video.

IT WAS AGREED – That an item be placed on future meetings of the Board on the maintenance plan that is in place for the Library.

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