

FRIENDS OF THE DURNING LIBRARY
DRAFT MINUTES of the TWENTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Durning Library, Monday 15 April 2019

1. **Welcome and introduction.** Chairman Priscilla Baines welcomed those attending the meeting, which had been preceded by a very positive talk by Susanna Barnes, Head of Lambeth Libraries. Apart from good news about the management of Lambeth Libraries as a whole, Susanna said that the Durning's budget had finally been safeguarded – for the next few years at least, 800+ new books had just been delivered and new computers were on order. Also repair and re-decoration plans were well under way. Overall books issued and visitor numbers had risen significantly throughout the borough, although we needed to keep working on this. Lambeth had finally recognised the importance of its libraries to the communities they served. Susanna also congratulated the Friends of the Durning for being so pro-active and well-organised.

2. **Apologies for absence.** Apologies were received from committee member Ruth Briant and 11 ordinary members.

3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 16 April 2018.** These were accepted as a true record. Proposed by Sue Giles, seconded by Dilys Cossey and carried nem con. There were no matters arising.

4. **Chairman's Report.** Priscilla commented that, for anything to do with local government, it was very rare these days to be able to open an occasion like this with such good news as relayed by Susanna. She congratulated Councillor Sonia Winifred for all her efforts on our behalf. To know that the library service had a previously unforeseen degree of stability for the next few years was very encouraging. It meant that we could plan with some confidence that we would not be going back to square one in a few months' time. It was heartening to hear Susanna's account of future developments and we looked forward to taking an active part in the promised review of the library service.

The long-overdue **external repairs** to this building had at last been completed, hopefully to a proper standard so that it was now watertight. Internal redecoration had been postponed, probably until June, but would mean phased closure for 1-2 weeks. We were still discussing improvement of **disabled access** to the building, which was proving to be even more of a challenge than anticipated. Although our preference had originally been for a ramp at the front of the building, regulations had changed and we now accepted that it would have to be an external lift. We welcomed the positive co-operation from all those involved in the attempts to find an acceptable solution, including renovation of the whole porch area.

The plans for the new '**library in the north**' of Lambeth last year were not currently being pursued. Should that proposition resurface – and it still had its supporters – the committee would continue to bear in mind our members' long-standing view that the Durning library should stay in the Durning building. If that turned out to be impossible, we would prefer a new 'north of the borough' library to nothing at all and would certainly press very strongly for provision within easy walking distance of Kennington Cross.

Until early this year the library service had been under the overall direction of Cathy Twist, who was replaced in February by Paul Wickens. He had an IT background which was very helpful in the context of libraries, which now depend increasingly on IT as well as books. He had taken over from Cathy as chair of the regular meetings of senior council officials (and when possible the cabinet member with library responsibilities) with representatives of the collective **Friends of Lambeth Libraries (FoLL)**, chaired by Laura Swaffield, and which Priscilla or another of our committee attended. These meetings had gradually become a more effective channel of communication and forum for discussion of library service developments. We were glad that Paul planned to continue them.

Last year we had welcomed **Liz Buchanan** as Durning Library manager, who was still in post. She was a fund of ideas and numerous library-based activities still took place. Our thanks as always to all the staff who had kept the library going, despite staffing shortages, and arranged well-attended events for different groups of users. Thanks also to all those Durning and other Lambeth library staff who had baby-sat our Friends' events during the year, particularly Oniel Williams and Anthony the porter, both of whom had several times stepped in at short notice.

Otherwise, on behalf of all our members, repeated thanks to the **committee** for their collective hard work. It remained, as always, a real team effort and we were very lucky to have such a willing and committed group on the committee.

Thanks as so often before to the regulars who helped with the talks, and to all the other members and attenders who helped so willingly with clearing up, as well as to the former committee members who helped out with the bar etc when required. It all contributed to making our events run smoothly.

Thanks to Sylvia Goodman for her efficient organisation of the delicious food that we all enjoyed, and to both long-standing and some new members of the food teams for their much-appreciated wonders. We always asked for **volunteers to help with the food**. Being a member of one of the teams was not a big task – at most three times a year – and one could choose when, so anyone interested should see Sylvia. Costs were refunded.

Our **e-mail distribution list** saved the cost of copying and postage and a lot of time. If members were not already on the e-mail list and were happy to hear from us by that means, please send an e-mail or give your e-mail address to our membership secretary, Val Parker, or any other committee member.

David Miles proposed and Susan Costello seconded that the Chairman's Report be adopted, carried nem con.

5. Treasurer's Report and accounts. Thanks to Jeremy for his continuing careful stewardship of our funds which were still healthy. He had continued to make much appreciated contributions to deliberations on strategic issues, including being a regular attender at FoLL and the joint meetings with Lambeth officials. Thanks also to Tony Clinch for undertaking the annual independent examination of our accounts.

Jeremy commented that he had reviewed our privacy policy as charged last year, and that all was in order. We had paid for our architect's advice on the proposed external lift. We generated enough funds to pay for extras that Lambeth couldn't, and we hoped to replace our audio equipment soon for something more user-friendly. In the circumstances he recommended that we continued with the same amounts for subscriptions and events.

Bob Goodrich proposed and Mary Powell seconded that the report and accounts be adopted, carried nem con.

6. Election of Chairman and Committee. Priscilla repeated her thanks to the whole committee for their hard work and, more importantly, for their continuing support. The year had ended on a relatively high note after a long period of some anxiety about the future. However, that good news came after we had again given a collective sigh and agreed that it was still not the moment to seek replacements or stand down. That remained our position but we were very conscious that, although we were all very strong supporters of the library, as a group we were not exactly representative of its users and most of us had been around for a long time. We also did not meet any diversity criteria. If we were re-elected, one of our tasks in the coming year would therefore be to find some new committee members. Our most urgent need was for a secretary but there were others who would like to stand down before we were removed from office by other untoward events.

As Priscilla said last year, the committee felt strongly that the Friends should, and would, have a vital role in helping to shape the Durning's future but we would all like to see the Friends led from the front by a younger generation of library users. We were by no means the only organisation that had trouble in finding new and, most importantly, younger members, so if anyone had any contacts who might like to be involved, do tell us.

Priscilla moved out of the chair for the election of the chairman and Kay Coombs took the chair for that part of the meeting. Kay thanked Priscilla for all that she had done for the Friends over the past 14 years, including attending countless meetings and copious e-mailing. Gordon Johnston proposed and Sylvia Goodman seconded Priscilla's re-election as Chairman, which was carried unanimously.

Priscilla then resumed the chair. The following members of the committee offered themselves for re-election: Elizabeth Barrott, Ruth Briant, Kay Coombs, Eleanor Halsall, Veronica Ledwith, Jeremy Orme, Val Parker and David Tisdall. David Miles proposed and Jill Johnston seconded their re-election as a slate, carried nem con.

7. Any other Business. There being no other business, Gordon Johnston thanked all the committee for their work over the past year.

David Tisdall thanked the officers of the committee, Priscilla, Jeremy and Kay, for all the extra work they took on.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Kay Coombs
Hon Secretary
April 2019