

MORETONHAMPSTEAD ASSOCIATION FOR YOUTH

Position on Library re-location August 2015

As it has been proposed that Moretonhampstead branch of Devon Libraries re-located to Green Hill and share premises with the Youth Club, this committee wishes to clarify its position.

The present Youth Centre at Green Hill is purpose-built. This followed a long campaign and many years of it running in unsatisfactory premises belonging to some one else, e.g swimming pool, parish hall. Since the move to Green Hill the quality of the youth club experience and the attendances have improved considerably, and it is now an established part of the community. It meets a major social need. The centre has been the envy of other towns. That we are able to offer plenty of space, allows young people to express themselves and choose activities and companions.

Since Devon Youth Services withdrew from rural youth clubs, and we have had to run the club entirely ourselves, it seems to us that this quality has improved still further. We have put a lot of effort into building up the club and membership and the relationships with members and parents. We have two dedicated members of staff, and 4 regular volunteers who have committed themselves to increased training in their own time.

We are now looking at projects and options up until Christmas and we have some exciting ideas including extending the use by opening extra evenings.

It is always hard work to keep something like this going, but the main challenge will be raising funds for future years – up to now we have been lucky with transitional grants and support from various trusts.

We do not want to jeopardise this success, so we are anxious about proposals for sharing rooms with the Library, especially as it would probably involve moving the Club Room upstairs and the computer / resource room downstairs.

In particular, we are concerned that

- (a) library shelving will mean we will lose space, make it more difficult for our large numbers to do what they want without conflicting with others and restrict the activities we offer;
- (b) moving the main club room upstairs will make the space less connected, whereas currently we use upstairs as a quieter area and overflow. Any boisterous activities such as dancing will have more impact on other users and neighbours if they take place upstairs.

We recognise how difficult it is to find a solution to the Library issue that would benefit the whole community, be cost-effective, and be sustainable in the future.

Ideally we would like to see the library take over the gallery, or failing that we would like to be able to use the present D of E office space. However, if neither of these is possible, we are willing to discuss how the computer / resource room could be shared, if a way can be found to meet our concerns. We feel strongly that, if the re-location goes ahead, there should be funds to pay for imaginative and young-people-friendly furniture and fittings, in this shared facility, so the quality of what we do is preserved. We would be interested to see examples of where something similar is working elsewhere.