

Saffron Walden Annual Town Meeting 2023 Report

Essex Library Service – Saffron Walden Library

Essex Library Service is at the heart of communities across Essex. Each library offers a lifeline for communities to: learn, go to work, relax, socialise, research, relax and connect with people. Users can access books from any of the 74 other Essex libraries and borrow books from some London and Surrey based libraries too. Three Pillars from the Essex Library Service Plan 2022-2026 scaffold all that we do.

Pillar 1 – Library Service and Literacy - Supporting residents with their learning, development, and engagement with reading

Thousands of eBooks and eAudio books can be read on a Apple, Android or kindle device via our Borrowbox app. This app also offers eBooks and eAudio books in Ukrainian.

Essex Record Office has an outpost within the library which is staffed 2.5 days a week.

For those interested in local history, Victorian studies, medieval manuscripts or academic research the adjacent independent **Gibson Library** (founded in 1832) contains more than 25,00 volumes, old maps, photographs, directories, periodicals and local ephemera. There is a research collection of more than 12,000 volumes. The public library throughout the year showcases much of this stock within exhibitions throughout the year.

Below is a snapshot from a portion of Saffron Walden Library's inclusive stock:

Everyone's Literacy stock

- New learning to read phonetic collection (Actiphon).
- Books with larger print and cream for young and adult readers that struggle to read for example as a result of Dyslexia or pushed for time.

Reading Well

- Books that support neurodiversity, mental health and wellbeing for children, teenagers and adults including those with long term health conditions.

Death Positive

- Books which promote an open culture around death, dying and bereavement with a mixture of practical tips, emotional and physical support.

Large Print

- Books range across all genres and are popular with the elderly and those with limited sight. We also signpost individuals to the Royal Institute for the Blind's Talking Books home delivery Service. We offer some supportive reading tools for those with limited sight.

Home Library Service

- Staff and volunteers deliver individually chosen books to those members that cannot access the library; across the town and to some villages.

Pillar 2 – Communications and Infrastructure - Making sure our communication is accessible and our buildings are in the right place, modern and sustainable

We have six personal computers, scanners and a photocopier available to use. Individuals with their own devices can access our Wi-Fi for free. We offer online learning and wellbeing courses through: ACL Essex, Essex Opportunities and Uttlesford Develop Me.

We provide a regular calendar of free inclusive weekly events. These include a mixture of song and reading (Rhymetime and Storytime), Warm Welcome Hubs (twice weekly) and Knit and Natter. We hope to restart a Digital Skills support course run by volunteers shortly.

The Library Service has a brand new Outreach bus to support local library events and two mobile libraries which serve our remote communities.

Pillar 3 – Supporting Communities and Levelling Up - Improving our ties with the community, making the library invaluable

Essex Library operate a rich array of promotions and events throughout the year on a monthly basis. Please see attached as a guide. We are always looking for new activities and new partners to enable us to reach out to as many of the socially isolated or economically disadvantaged as we can. We work closely with Uttlesford Foodbank and the Citizen Advice Bureau team to promote support for those that are struggling in some way.

In a bid to reach out to individuals that may think the library is not for them we are planning a range of new events and outreach venues throughout the town which we hope will attract new individuals to join.

Highlights from 2022 outreach activities

Promotion of the Essex Library Service and Saffron Walden Library at: Saffron Walden Town Council *Summer in the Square* Activities for families, Ukraine National Day, Eco-Market on the common, Menopause Awareness evening, Robin Hood Performances, Uttlesford Careers Fair at County High School, Saffron Walden Town Council and Churches Together and Warm Welcome Hub network.

Plans for 2023 include: Safer Internet Day and Love Your Library (Feb) Work Matters (mini local job and training fair) (March), Local History (May), Dying Matters (May) and Rocks/Gems Fest (August).

We are grateful and inspired to work with a tight and expanding network of partners whom underpin our current and future plans to deliver a friendly, responsive and accessible library service to all. These include: Essex Wellbeing Service, Saffron Walden Town Council, Uttlesford Business Support, Uttlesford Food Bank, Mind in West, UCAN, Saffron Walden Museum, Essex Therapy Dogs, United in Kind, St. Clare Hospice, Carers First, Citizen Advice Bureau, The Transition Project, Harlow College, Anglia Ruskin College, Stansted Airport Employment Academy, Chesterford Research Park (contractors) and RA Butler leisure Centre.

Interested to find out more visit: [Everyone's Library Service 2022-2026 \(essex.gov.uk\)](#) and [Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021 to 2025: Foreword from Kevin Bentley - Essex County Council](#)