

Dick Newman says that Branston library has never looked back since it came under community management.

The retired ex-serviceman has been volunteering at Branston library in Lincolnshire since the parish council took over responsibility for running it more than three years ago.



“It’s a pleasure to volunteer with like-minded people to provide a first class service for our library users,” said Dick. “We help people find the book they’re looking for, use the computers, issue and return books, check stock, order books – all the things you might expect.

“We also have plenty of autonomy to decide on themes and events to get people engaged. We have a Lego club for children, we run a weekly storytime, and a knitting and crochet group as well as craft activities for children and adults.”

Dick is very proud that Branston library was named by Penguin as one of 14 “wonderful libraries that will make every kid a reader”.

The library has been very successful in attracting local groups to meet at the library, e.g. U3A. The library provides tea and coffee for a small fee.

“We ask for 50p but people always pay £1,” said Dick. “They help us to stay in profit. They’re very generous.”

They also hold regular sales of books and puzzles that help to raise funds.

Dick and the other volunteers get a lot out of it, Dick said.

“It’s very satisfying to help people,” added Dick. “And the general public are always quick to say thank you for keeping their library open.”

As a parish councillor, Dick was very keen that the village should continue to benefit from a library service when Lincolnshire County Council announced that its libraries were going to become community hubs run by volunteers.

Branston and Mere Parish Council works with GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) which manages library services on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council. GLL is a not-for-profit charitable social enterprise that runs libraries, archives and museum services across the country, together with a large number of leisure centres. GLL provides the infrastructure for the library service, selecting and providing stock, responding to requests and reservations. Volunteers are trained by GLL’s Library Development Officers.

Locally there is also a duty rota co-ordinator who is paid by the parish council. Volunteers usually do two-hour shifts once a week and the library is open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays for four hours each day.