

**Council, Tuesday 20 December 2005**

**Opposition Policy Item to be moved by Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Council recalls the success of staff in winning Beacon Council status for Barnet's libraries, the refurbishment of Hendon Library, the extension of library opening hours and improvement to library facilities under the leadership of Councillor Susette Palmer when Labour and the Liberal Democrats led the Council.

Council also recalls that in July 2002 the Conservative administration promised: "Barnet Council has no plans to reduce the number of libraries," before agreeing to close South Friern library and Totteridge library.

Council condemns the Administration for breaking its subsequent promise to re-provide Totteridge Library.

Council notes the Administration's attempt to close South Friern Library has been thwarted by local residents campaigning against the closure and sale. Council urges the Cabinet to publish the winning specification for the new library, and to provide a guarantee that the floor-space, staffing, facilities and opening hours will match or improve on the current South Friern library.

Council regrets that in 2005/6 the administration cut £369,000 from libraries by cutting over 42 hours of library opening, scrapping a mobile library van and 22 weekly mobile library visits, and buying fewer new books.

Council urges the Cabinet, when considering its proposals for the 2006/7 budget, not to close more libraries, not to cut more library opening hours and not to cut more library staffing levels. Council particularly urges the Cabinet not to proceed with the Cabinet Member's preference to close ten libraries. In contrast, Council urges the Cabinet to invest in libraries, including the extension of opening hours.