

Extraordinary Council Meeting: Tuesday, 3 March 2015

Motion in the name of Councillor Alison Moore

Libraries

Council recognises that councillors and residents across Barnet strongly value their local libraries for their contributions to culture, literacy and the wider community.

Council notes the proposal to cut the Library Service budget by £2.85 million over the next three years, and the consultation on three different options to achieve this which include, in various combinations:

- Closing Mill Hill Library, East Finchley Library, Childs Hill Library, Osidge Library, East Barnet Library and South Friern Library
- reducing floor space by up to 90% at many libraries
- cutting the hours libraries are staffed by up to 60%

Council recognises the strength of public concern about and opposition to these options.

Council notes that the proposed budget cuts do not begin until 2016/17 and therefore LB Barnet has time to re-consider the plans.

Council therefore calls for a halt on plans to cut the library service until LB Barnet has re-consulted residents on a full range of options in order to secure the long-term future of a full professional library service in Barnet. The consultation should include an option to enhance the service provided whilst at least maintaining the current scope and reach of the library service in terms of floor space, opening hours and staffing.

In drawing up these options Council believes LB Barnet should look at:

- maximising the use of alternative funding streams such as developer contributions and government digital investment funds;
- more ambitious and creative income generation, working with local businesses and community organisations;
- developing libraries as community hubs for skills, culture, learning and improving community cohesion and literacy;
- drawing on best practice models from London boroughs and across the country and emerging government responses to the independent Sieghart report on England's public libraries.

Council also asks that the local community, including library users groups, and staff are involved in the development of the options for consultation.