
Cabinet Member for Education

10th March 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education – Councillor D Kershaw

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director for People

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Library Petitions

Is this a key decision?

No, as the report doesn't contain any proposals that would significantly affect residents of the City.

Executive Summary:

A number of e-petitions and written petitions have been presented to the Council asking for the Council to reconsider making cuts to local library services. These include a petitions specifically related to the community libraries in Canley, Coundon, Earlsdon, Tile Hill, and Willenhall, and a further petition related more generally to the Library Service across the City. In accordance with the City Council's procedure for dealing with petitions, those relating to library issues are heard by the Cabinet Member for Education.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Education:-

- 1) Notes the petitions and requests that Officers write to the petition organisers to advise them of the Council's current position and assure them that the petitioners will be encouraged to participate in any discussions in relation to the future of library services in Coventry.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Library Petitions

1. Background

- 1.1 An e-petition “Keep Earlsdon Library Open” was presented to the Council on 8th January 2015 with 10 signatures (subsequently increased to 1396), organised by an Earlsdon Ward resident on behalf of the joint Earlsdon Neighbourhood Associations and sponsored by Councillor Ken Taylor OBE asking:-

“We, the undersigned, hereby urge Coventry City Council to retain the valuable and popular Earlsdon Library, which provides a range of good quality facilities for the benefit of all ages in the local community.”

This petition has been supplemented by a similarly worded written petition of 1,649 names.

- 1.2 An e-petition “Save Coundon Library was presented to the Council on 9th February 2015 with 10 signatures (subsequently increased to 35), organised by a Radford Ward resident and sponsored by Cllr Skipper asking:-

“We, the undersigned, hereby urge Coventry City Council to retain the valuable and popular Coundon Library, which provides a range of good quality facilities for the benefit of all ages in the local community.”

- 1.3 An e-petition “Save Tile Hill Library” was presented to the Council on 4th February 2015 with 10 signatures (subsequently increased to 53), organised by a Woodlands Ward resident asking:-

“We, the undersigned, protest at the cuts planned by Coventry City Council including closing virtually every library, children and family centre, adult education and community centre, making cuts in transport for disabled children and sacking all lollipop men and women, reducing street cleaning and road maintenance, and axing another 1000 jobs that will then never be available to the young people of our city.

We particularly object to the plan to close Tile Hill Library on Jardine Crescent which has been used for many years by families and especially children in our area. Libraries are an essential safe space, open new doors and horizons to enquiring minds, and are central to healthy, local communities.”

- 1.4 An e-petition “Against Library Closures” was presented to the Council on 4th February 2015 with 10 signatures (subsequently increased to 148), organised by the Coventry City Branch of UNISON asking:-

“We the undersigned oppose the City Councils “City Centre First” strategy as referenced in the current budget proposal that would see Council run Libraries reduced from 17 to 5. We call upon the Council to keep all our Libraries open; to maintain a high quality and fully accountable Public Library Service, without replacing employed professional and well trained staff with Volunteers.”

This petition has been supplemented by a similarly worded written petition of 2,253 names.

- 1.5 A written petition “Save Canley Library” containing 136 signatures was submitted to the Council meeting held on 24th February 2015 organised by a local resident and sponsored by Cllr Skinner asking:

“We the undersigned protest at the cuts planned by Coventry City Council including closing virtually every library, children and family centre, adult education and community centre, making cuts in transport for disabled children and sacking crossing wardens, reducing street cleaning and road maintenance and axing another 1000 jobs that will then never be available to the young people of our city.

We particularly object to the plan to close Canley Library on Prior Deram Walk, Canley which has been used for many years for families and especially children in the area. It is a welcoming and pleasant library offering many activities and opportunities to study for all in the area. Libraries are an essential safe space, open new doors and horizons to enquiring minds especially in deprived areas of the city such as Canley. They are central to the heart of healthy communities.”

- 1.6 A written “Petition to save Willenhall Library” containing 405 signatures was presented to the Council meeting held on 24th February 2015 by Cllr Lakha asking:

“We the undersigned residents of Willenhall and Binley are worried about the closure of Willenhall library because of the reports in local newspapers. Willenhall library is a great resource for the local community and is well used. We request the City Council to protect this library from closure for the residents of this area.”

- 1.7 The City Council currently operate a Library Service comprising Central Library plus 16 community libraries, a mobile service and an at home service. Whilst the UNISON petition requests that the City Council protect the Library Service as a whole other petitions refer to individual libraries:

- Earlsdon Library, located in Earlsdon Avenue North, is one of the city’s three Carnegie Community Libraries that celebrated their 100th year anniversary in 2013.
- Canley Library, located in Prior Deram Walk Canley was originally built by the US Air Force and donated to the City over 60 years ago.
- Coundon Library, located in Moseley Avenue celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2014.
- Tile Hill Library and Learning Centre, located in Jardine Crescent, is a modern library and a venue for Adult Education classes and has strong links to the adjacent Children’s Centre.
- Willenhall Library is located in Remembrance Road in the Willenhall central shopping parade. The building is not owned by the City Council.

- 1.8 The petitions relates to genuine concern from local residents regarding the level of service reductions that may need to be considered by Coventry City Council. It is a reality that the City Council has to make significant reductions in the amount of money it spends as a result of Government funding reductions. These reductions have required the Council to carefully consider all the various services it spends money on and this must include libraries.

- 1.9 The way in which library provision is provided across the city may be considered within service reviews. The challenges faced by the City Council present the opportunity to reflect on changing patterns of library use, and the changing needs of library users. The Council is currently exploring whether there are any alternative models of delivery which may retain services but deliver significantly reduced costs to the Council. Options will include the co-location of different services and opportunities to co-operate with statutory and non-statutory partners in the City.

1.10 No decisions have been taken regarding the closure of any of the city's libraries. Any future proposals to make changes to the library service will be subject to public consultation. Officers will work over the coming months with the various groups and individuals who have expressed an interest in library services to see if they can work with the Council to deliver a better service at reduced cost.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 There is no current proposal to close any community libraries therefore, there is no further action that Officers are recommending to take in terms of this request.

2.2 The Cabinet Member is recommended to request that Officers write to the petition spokespersons to advise them of the Council's current position and assure them that residents and petitioners will be encouraged to participate in any future discussions in relation to library services in Coventry.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 No consultation has been undertaken. Any future proposals about the provision of library services in the future will at a formative stage and prior to any decisions being made be the subject of a full consultation exercise.

4. Comments from Executive Director for Resources

4.1 Financial implications
There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

4.2 Legal implications
There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

5. Other implications

5.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Not applicable.

5.2 How is risk being managed?

None

5.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

5.4 Equalities / EIA

None

5.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None.

5.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

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Councillor D Kershaw	Cabinet Member for Education	-	19 February 2015	19 February 2015

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