

## Protecting and shaping Haringey's Libraries with residents, and making sure they are fit for the future. ~~Protecting Haringey's Libraries, and increasing library footfall and revenue~~

Proposer: Cllr Arkell Conner

Seconder: Cllr Bartlett Rossetti

Council notes:

- That over 500 responses were received to the 2024/25 budget consultation, many of which were regarding proposed changes to our library services, and multiple representations were made by residents which all informed the next steps in a challenging budget process. The overwhelming opposition to library cuts submitted as responses to the 2024/25 budget consultation;
- That there are no plans to close any libraries in Haringey and that none have been closed in Haringey the Borough since the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition inflicted austerity on the UK in 2010, despite 800 closing nationally. and recognises that this leaves the borough in a better place than some neighbours. However, this cannot be used to deflect from the fact that the recent decision to cut hours will negatively impact Haringey's residents in a multitude of ways;
- That in 2014, Haringey Council was forced by the Liberal Democrat enabled Tory austerity imposed on it to more effectively and efficiently use its finite resources, which led to closing the, despite opposition, Haringey Labour closed the mobile library service in Haringey in 2014 and, retaining only the housebound part of the service for its most vulnerable users.;
- That in 2016, Haringey Council listened to residents and reversed plans to close. Following a review in 2016, council announced plans that would have seen the closure of Highgate Library and Muswell Hill Library, but were forced to reverse the decision due to overwhelming public opposition;
- Since 2018, The significant capital investment in Haringey's the Council has invested £4.9m in our libraries since 2018 to improve library buildings and facilities, to with a target that the investment would increase library use, accessibility and footfall, to library buildings;
- That cuts to some council services are unavoidable and difficult but necessary as we are £143m worse off in real terms per year than we were before the Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition's austerity measures, and demand on adults and children's social care and temporary accommodation services, are extremely high and rising. libraries are a political choice, not a financial necessity, and the proposed cuts for this year and beyond could have been avoided by approving the Liberal Democrat Amendment to the 2023/2024 budget;
- As part of developing the Library Strategy, we will be working with residents, friend's groups and staff to search identify for opportunities to expand the number of services which can be delivered from libraries, in an effort to improve footfall and increase the number of library users in the borough;
- That the Director of Culture, Strategy and Engagement, and the Lead Cabinet Member for Libraries conceded at a Budget Scrutiny panel in In December 2023, before the budget consultation was launched, that the only two a range of options were explored and discussed at Cabinet to mitigate any changes to libraries. Three proposals went out to consultation and following listening to resident responses,

~~proposals were amended to reflect their views, in the options appraisal for libraries were the cuts as proposed, or the closure of some council libraries;~~

- ~~• An extensive equalities impact assessment was completed for the MTFS budget to identify potential equalities implications. A full The preliminary equalities assessment will be completed for each library and we will work within legal duties to understand the equality impacts of the proposals, and minimise them on the most vulnerable residents in Haringey.~~ presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee predicted that cuts to libraries would have a negative impact on young people, older people, the disabled, parents of young children and those with the lowest socioeconomic status;
- ~~• Any changes to our libraries will be shaped and co-designed with residents, friends groups and staff to inform a library strategy that safeguards ves libraries for the future. That the cuts to council libraries are being carried out before an up to date library strategy has been published.~~

Council believes:

- Libraries are the only way that many children living in the borough have access to books, the only place for many of Haringey's young people to study to ensure that they can maximise their full potential in life and that is why we are keeping them open, have invested heavily in them and will be working with young people as part of our library strategy to ensure we shape libraries are shaped so that they will want to use and can accessthem;
- Libraries provide essential internet access for those without it, especially those that are jobseekers, elderly, or living in financial hardship; and that's why investing £4.9m in our libraries to make them more attractive, accessible and better resourced to support vulnerable groups across Haringey give resident.
- Libraries provide a warm and safe space for many residents that would otherwise not have one, and so help prevent loneliness and poor health; and that is why we have used them for as warm spaces in the winter months, especially during the cost of living crisis fuelled by aAusterity measures.
- Libraries are an open-door arts and events venue, providing a vital community space for a large number of events and local groups at all hours, and we look forward to enhancing and utilising these spaces more. as part of our library strategy. and s;
- That instead of cuts and reduced hours of access, the council could have taken the decision to close libraries but didn't because we value libraries as much as our residents do. should be searching for opportunities to expand the number of services which can be delivered from libraries in an effort to improve footfall and increase the number of library users in the borough;
- Some areas of our libraries have not been utilised as much as anticipated for many reasons, including limited funding, resources, take up from residents. That libraries are being severely underutilised, particularly in regards to revenue-raising opportunities, and that there has been a lack of strategic direction in maximising existing spaces in council libraries and a lack of support provided to library staff from council, with one example of this being the sensory room in Hornsey Library which was installed in 2020, but then left unused until 2023 due to a lack of and the global pandemic in 2020 that prevented our ability to open libraries during lockdowns and because we needed safeguard our residents. instructions being provided to library staff on how to use the space;
- That libraries are a public space and community hub which are primed to facilitate events, activities, debates, music, arts, poetry and culture, celebrating the rich diversity that residents have to offer, and exciting opportunities that will come from

hosting the London Borough of Culture in 2027 which libraries will play a key role in will be central to its delivery.

rol That events taking place at some of our libraries such as the recent inaugural Crouch End Literary Festival demonstrates that with the correct strategy, and people in charge, events can bring in significant additional footfall and revenue, filling underutilised spaces already available within our libraries, however this should not be left solely to community groups and local organisations;

That a library strategy should form a basis for the library service We will maximise ing the offer our libraries can make to residents, by increasing their usage footfall and putting libraries on a sustainable footing, shaping a highlighting a long-term plan with residents to safeguard thefor the service for the future., and should not be used as a shield for cuts to the service.

Council resolves:

- To continue to support and protect the most vulnerable residents in Haringey and ensure our libraries remain open. To reverse any agreed reduction in library opening hours or services;
- To work with residents, Friends groups and staff to create sustainable and future-proof libraries that are at the heart of our communities. To await the publication of the library strategy and review before any further decisions are made on the future of Haringey libraries;
- To work with our libraries staff, residents and Friends of groups to ensure we capture all ideas and co-produce the library strategy with them, and work with our communication team and other platforms, so we can publicise this widely and so engaged and interested residents to can get involved and help to shape the service they want to see, use and enjoy.
- To set out publish a consultation and engagement timeline which sets out how residents, friends groups and staff can contribute to the development of the strategy. To ask Cabinet to commit to producing its long-promised library strategy within six months, through a process of co-production with residents and Friends groups as equal partners as part of production and oversight of the strategy. This partnership should first agree its terms of reference and have clear parameters of how the governance, financial strategy and future oversight of any new library strategy will be undertaken;
- To request that the Senior Manager with responsibility for the library service outlines their co-production strategy within the next 4 weeks and publicises this widely so concerned residents can get involved and help to find solutions;
- That a full Equalities Impact Assessment will take place for each library is completed as part of the development of the -our library strategy plan which will inform any changes made to ensure we work within our legal duties by understanding and the impact of proposals, minimising their impact of the proposals on the most vulnerable and to make sure our libraries remain accessible prior to any changes the council might wish to make to library hours or budgets;
- In developing the library strategy there is consideration of That as part of council's library strategy, council considers aw a wide-range ofing options which willith a focus on increasing usage, footfall, footfall and revenue income, utilisationise of library spaces, and in a manner that will increase library use, listen to residents as we shape an accessible and future proofsustainable library service that is safeguarded for future generations. so thatincluding but not limited to:

- Incorporating “Libraries of Things” into existing buildings, in line with 2022 manifesto commitments from both the Haringey Labour Party and the Haringey Liberal Democrats;
- Working with financial partners to introduce “Bank Hubs” into more libraries, with a greater range of services and more availability, helping to compensate for the loss of bank branches around the borough;
- Investigating the commercial rental of space inside or outside of library buildings for parcel pickup points, such as Amazon/Evri Lockers;
- Considering opportunities for community enterprises within library buildings such as hospitality that would provide a rent income stream whilst also providing additional community benefit and supporting the ethos of libraries;

We've taken the residents views