

## **Protecting and shaping Haringey's Libraries with residents and making sure they are fit for the future**

Proposer: Cllr Arkell

Seconder: Cllr Bartlett

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.
- That there are no plans to close any libraries in Haringey and that none have closed in the Borough since the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition inflicted austerity on the UK in 2010, despite 800 closing nationally.
- That in 2014, Haringey Council was forced by the Liberal Democrat enabled Tory austerity policies imposed on it to more effectively and efficiently use its finite resources, which led to closing the mobile library service in Haringey and retain 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 Highgate Library and Muswell Hill Library.
- Since 2018, the Council has invested £4.9m in library buildings and facilities, to increase library use, accessibility and footfall.
- 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.
- In developing the library strategy, we will work with residents, friend's groups and staff to identify opportunities to expand the number of services which can be delivered from libraries, improve footfall and increase the number of library users in the borough.
- In December 2023, before the budget consultation was launched, a range of options were explored and discussed at Cabinet to mitigate any changes to libraries. Three proposals were consulted on and after listening to resident responses, proposals were amended to reflect their views.
- An extensive equalities impact assessment was completed for the MTFS budget to identify potential equalities implications. A full equalities assessment will be completed for each library and we will work within legal duties to understand the equality impacts of the proposals.
- Any changes to our libraries will be shaped and co-designed with residents, friends groups and staff to inform a library strategy that safeguards libraries for the future.

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 libraries are shaped so that they will want to use them;
- 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.
- 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 as warm spaces in the winter months, especially during the cost of living crisis fuelled by austerity measures.

- Libraries are an open-door arts and events venue, providing a vital community space for a large number of events and local groups, and we look forward to enhancing and utilising these spaces more.
- 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.
- Some areas of our libraries have not been utilised as much as anticipated for many reasons, including limited funding, resources, take up from residents, and the global pandemic in 2020 that prevented our ability to open libraries during lockdowns because we needed safeguard our residents.
- 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 its delivery.
- We will maximise the offer our libraries can make to residents, by increasing their usage putting libraries on a sustainable footing, shaping a long-term plan with residents to safeguard the service for the future.

Council resolves:

- To continue to support and protect the most vulnerable residents in Haringey and ensure our libraries remain open.
- To work with residents, friends groups and staff to create sustainable and future-proof libraries that are at the heart of our communities.
- To work with our libraries staff, residents and friend's 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 engage interested residents to get involved and help to shape the service they want to see, use and enjoy.
- To publish a consultation and engagement timeline which sets out how residents, friends groups and staff can contribute to the development of the strategy.
- That a full Equalities Impact Assessment will take place for each library as part of the development of the library strategy which will inform any changes made to ensure we work within our legal duties by understanding and minimising the impact of the proposals on the most vulnerable and to make sure our libraries remain accessible.
- In developing the library strategy there is consideration of a wide-range of options which will focus on increasing usage, footfall and income, utilisation of library spaces, and listen to residents as we shape an accessible and sustainable library service that is safeguarded for future generations.