



Successfully saving our library from closure and cuts since 1989

Highgate Library Action Group  
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Cllr Emily Arkell  
Haringey Council  
Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure  
River Park House  
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10 October 2024

Dear Councillor Arkell,

**Haringey Libraries Public Consultation and Cuts to Libraries Budget**

We are writing about Haringey's proposals to reduce spending for libraries by £675,000, equating to around 7% of the Council's total savings for 2024/25, and in the context of the current libraries consultation that runs until 10 October this year.

The consultation documentation is very detailed and presents much fact. Ultimately, however, it contains just two proposals, both of which relate solely to reducing opening hours. It therefore offers no choice. Both will result in significantly cutting Highgate Library's opening hours by over 50%. Overall, this would likely mean closures of two days per week and closures at lunch time.

To be absolutely clear, HLAG does not support either proposal or any other reduction of libraries service provision.

HLAG was also disappointed to note in the consultation documentation Haringey's claim that the consultation had been 'co-produced' with local community groups. This suggests that library supporter groups, inter alia, are in favour of the proposals, thus lending credibility to the consultation. For the record, this is not the case; the borough's library supporter groups have been kept at arm's length throughout the consultation's development process, despite their repeated requests to be included.

Cont'd

HLAG applauds Haringey's objective to not close any libraries permanently but would like to draw its attention to some further points:

1. We would go as far to as to contend that the public consultation does not meet any of The Gunning Principles applicable to local government public consultations, thus making it illegitimate.
2. We accept that Haringey must save money. However, there are other ways of doing this. We note that Haringey has recruited new senior part-time directors and has also given substantial pay rises to incumbent senior staff.

Whilst not levelling any criticism against the individuals in post, these do seem unusual actions and in stark contrast with the Council's strategy to reduce its overall spending by cutting service provision.

In addition, we understand alternative cost saving proposals had been presented, such as re-tendering the leisure services contract rather than bringing it in-house. This would have been achieved by re-tendering the leisure services contract to external organisations which provide such services successfully in neighbouring boroughs. This alone could generate a cost saving of £675,000. It was unfortunately rejected.

3. The cut of 31% is in significant contrast with the Haringey-wide budget cut of only 3%. Libraries are being required to shoulder an unfair share of the burden, suggesting that in fact Haringey is not a big supporter of libraries. We also query if money is being redirected away from libraries in order for Haringey to fund the delivery of London Borough of Culture in 2027.
4. Earlier this year, you were quoted in the Ham and High as saying that Haringey Council had invested millions of pounds to make its libraries "fit for the future". We hope you might appreciate that, for library supporters, to find "fit for the future" actually means "frequently shut" is, to say the least, deeply disappointing and feels like a step towards closing libraries.



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5. We understand the Council's aim is that other libraries in the borough would be open when Highgate Library is closed. In practice, however, the user who finds Highgate Library shut, is rarely going to make an additional journey by public transport to another library such as Hornsey or Stroud Green & Harringay. In fact, the alternative library most accessible from public transport from Highgate is Muswell Hill Library, which is of course currently closed for refurbishment. We therefore urge the Council to reconsider its proposals for part closure and to look at other cost savings options.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Englezou', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Nicola Englezou  
Chair, Highgate Library Action Group

cc. Councillor Nick DaCosta, Liberal Democrats  
Councillor Scott Emery, Liberal Democrats  
Councillor Marsha Isilar-Gosling, Liberal Democrats  
Tulip Siddiq, Labour MP for Hampstead & Highgate Ward