

'CALL IN' OF DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

This form is to be used for the 'calling in' of decisions of the above bodies, in accordance with the procedure set out in Part 4 Section H.2 of the Constitution.

TITLE OF MEETING	Cabinet
DATE OF MEETING	Tuesday 10 th December 2024
MINUTE No. AND TITLE OF ITEM	9. Review of Libraries Operating Hours

1. Reason for Call-In/Is it claimed to be outside the policy or budget framework?

Reasons for call-in:

- The Council's Constitution requires an Annual Library Plan to be approved by Full Council. Though this provision is out of date in that an Annual Library Plan is no longer required by central government; it nevertheless remains a part of Haringey's Constitution. No Annual Library Plan has been approved, arguably meaning any decision taken on libraries is being taken outside the policy framework.
- In absence of an Annual Library Plan, there are a number of metrics outlined for improvements involving libraries within the Corporate Delivery Plan, including: the number of internet accesses in libraries; increasing opportunities to showcase local creativity and heritage in libraries; and widening the use of libraries; all of which are put at risk by the decision to shorten opening hours.
- DCMS Guidance recommends that councils wishing to reduce library hours must 'undertake strategic planning of changes', but Haringey is proposing to make this major policy change without either the constitutionally mandated Annual Library Plan or a Library Strategy of any variety in-place.
- The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act requires that library services are maintained 'for all persons desiring to make use thereof', yet the cuts being implemented fall disproportionately on the most used libraries in the borough, i.e. those libraries with most 'persons desiring to make use'.
- Consultation with residents and Friends groups did not meet the council's principles of co-design as set out in the new Arts & Culture Strategy, which was acknowledged by the Director of the Service at the Cabinet meeting.
- The council consulted on two options with the public, but in event a third option, not consulted on, was agreed by Cabinet. That other options were possible was not communicated to the public during the consultation period.

- Councillors are required by law not to predetermine decisions. However, the council released a press statement a week in advance of Cabinet's decision, entitled "Haringey libraries set to remain open with reduced hours" and including a quote from the relevant Cabinet Member, Cllr Arkell, "there will now be reduced hours ... Something that came across strongly in a lot of the responses was the need for our library provision to be equitable and fair across the borough and we believe we've delivered that." This indicates that the decision may have been predetermined, and that the decision had, in effect, been agreed by Cabinet prior to the meeting.

The requisite parts of the Policy Framework are not in place to allow Cabinet to take an informed decision on the reduction in library hours. Without proper strategies in place it is impossible to take a view on whether these cuts provide value for residents.

2. Variation of Action Proposed

The council should publish a Library Strategy before implementing changes to library opening hours. Only when this is completed would the decision satisfy the policy and budget framework.

Signed:

Councillor Alessandra Rossetti

Countersigned:

1. Councillor Luke Cawley-Harrison
2. Councillor Dawn Barnes
3. Councillor Scott Emery
4. Councillor Nick da Costa
5. Councillor Marsha Isilar-Gosling

Date Submitted: 23/12/2024

Date Received :

(to be completed by the Democratic Services Manager)

Notes:

1. Please send this form to:
Ayshe Simsek(on behalf of the Proper Officer)
Acting Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
5th Floor
River Park House
225 High Road, Wood Green, London N22 8HQ
Tel: 8489 2920
Fax: 020 8881 5218

This form must be received by the Acting Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager by 10.00 a.m. on the fifth working day following publication of the minutes.

2. The proper officer will forward all timely and proper call-in requests to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and notify the decision taker and the relevant Director.
3. A decision will be implemented after the expiry of ten working days following the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee's receipt of a call-in request, unless a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee takes place during the 10 day period.
4. If a call-in request claims that a decision is contrary to the policy or budget framework, the Proper Officer will forward the call-in requests to the Monitoring Officer and /or Chief Financial Officer for a report to be prepared for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advising whether the decision does fall outside the policy or budget framework.