



MEMBERS QUESTIONS

12 MARCH 2004

Question from Councillor Terry Dicks:

Question regarding Addlestone library:

Could the area library manager provide a full update regarding the current closure of Addlestone library?

Response by Rose Wilson, Library Service Manager, North West Surrey:

In January some library staff expressed concerns about the air quality in the building and experts from outside the authority were asked to carry out tests. Initial results were received by telephone on 3 February. The tests showed above average levels of a fungal spore, aspergillus, which is usually associated with damp conditions. Aspergillus is a common fungus that can grow in the outside environment and also inside buildings. It was decided as a precaution to close the library on the 4 February pending the arrival of the full report and its recommendations.

The report recommended a range of work to be carried out on the air re-circulating system in the library including cleaning ductwork and introducing filters. To address the damp problem repairs are being carried out to the guttering and walls waterproofed. All the carpets in the library have also been replaced and the building given a thorough clean.

Medical advice was sought from a variety of sources including the Surrey Health Protection Unit. Their view is that the fungus is unlikely to have an effect on healthy people but it can cause allergic reactions in some people and lung disease if people who have seriously low immune systems are exposed to it. They advised us that people should ring NHS direct if they wanted more information about aspergillus. As an employer it would be wrong for us to discuss publicly the health or other personal details of members of staff at the library but we will offer whatever support we can to any members of staff who may be concerned about the effect of this on their health. None of the staff are currently on sick leave but are doing relief work at other libraries.

The work to the heating and ventilating systems and treating the damp is almost completed and further tests are being carried out to make sure the aspergillus spores are at a normal level. We are unable to say for certain when the library will re-open but we hope it will be during the week beginning 15 March.