

**CABINET**

Tuesday 23 June 2015

**RESPONSE TO PETITION**

**The Petition concerning 'Lingfield Library'**

It states: 'We the undersigned, would like to register our dismay at the proposed changes to the staffing of Lingfield Library, and ask the Library service to re-consider its decision to remove them.'

**Details of petition:**

We believe Surrey County Council (SCC) misled us with their statement at the public meeting last June that Lingfield Library, with its current staff, would stay as it is for one year after the new trust is set up, to enable the trust to pursue ways of paying staff from funds.

We understand that Lingfield will have no continuity of staff as we are single manned and both staff will be relocated.

No one from the library service would surely opt for Lingfield as their base for one year unless they have a guarantee of a placement elsewhere at the end of that year. They would also be taking on extra responsibilities as our library assistant does now, as a lower grade.

The security of the building and its contents will be a major concern.

Has SCC considered borrowers with special needs? We have borrowers who rely on the staff to help them choose or obtain the reading material they prefer. Some are afraid to deal with 'new' people, preferring to wait until either of the staff they recognise is on duty if relief staff are in. Familiarity and continuity are vital for such people.

Do the senior library service staff have any first hand knowledge of our library? The relationship between staff and users, the ambience and social atmosphere. Do they even care?

Submitted by Mrs Rita Russell

Signatures: 294

**Response**

Surrey County Council has not misled residents. A meeting of Cabinet 24 July 2012 decided that Lingfield Library was one of ten libraries that would become a Community Partnered Library. At the public meeting last June, the Leader committed SCC to retaining the status of Lingfield as an SCC managed library until one year after the establishment of arrangements for the new Trust to take over responsibility for the building. The decision regarding this arrangement was taken by the Leader on 9 June 2015. The Leader was happy to take this decision because of the success of the already established Community Partnered Libraries in Surrey. That commitment included continuing to provide staff from the library service to run the library. In the meantime (and this position was discussed by SCC in the negotiations with the prospective trustees) Lingfield Library remains managed by the

Surrey County Council library service as part of the directly managed library network and therefore included in the operational review of the library service.

One of the aims of the Library Review is to improve training and development opportunities for staff so that libraries can continue to improve the service offered to residents and can deliver on SCC's priorities, particularly to help people live and age well, to promote volunteering in building community resilience and to expand the range of services available locally. The Review is county-wide and will give all staff the broader experience of other libraries serving other communities so that all libraries can progressively improve - to the benefit of all residents

Across the library service as a whole there is recognition that members of the community with special characteristics require additional support and care to get the most from their library. This was recognised both in the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for community partnered libraries in 2012 and in the EIA for the library review in 2014 and is reflected in training and customer care guidance for staff across the service as a whole. Feedback on library staff is very positive across the whole service.

The library service operates from a wide range of premises (including a number of listed buildings) and within the everyday role of library managers, there is always responsibility for the security of the building and on site property and valuables. New staff will be properly inducted and be under the same guidance and supervision as current staff.

The library service will continue to provide appropriately trained staff for Lingfield Library. Library staff throughout the service have the training, skills, sensitivity and customer service skills to deal with people with a variety of needs and characteristics, and knowledge of the wider library service and its range of over 100 services will help library users at Lingfield. Staff will be provided who will work regularly at Lingfield - but working in rotation as required rather than permanently based there - and will soon build appropriate relationships with library users. Developing good relationships with library users and the community is part of the job of every member of the library staff.

**Mr Richard Walsh**  
**Cabinet Member for Localities and Community Wellbeing**  
**23 June 2015**