

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Nottingham City Council Libraries Transformation Proposals Public Consultation Event – Aspley Library</b>
<b>Date &amp; time</b>	Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2022, 1.30pm – 3pm
<b>Venue</b>	Aspley Library
<b>Attendance</b>	55
<b>Speakers</b>	Cllr David Mellen, Leader of the Council, NCC (DM) Nigel Hawkins, Head of Culture and Libraries, NCC (NH) Terranum Abbas, Library Services Manager, NCC (TA)
<b>Host</b>	Jon Rae, Consultation and Engagement Manager, NCC (JR)

This was the 5<sup>th</sup> public consultation session on the transformation proposals for Nottingham City Library services and first local event focused on Aspley Library.

This was an in person event, open to the public. The event was advertised via Nottingham City Council website Engage Hub, The Next Chapter pages on the Libraries website and via social media channels. The event was also advertised in all city council libraries and local leaflet drop took place in the immediate neighbourhood. Pre event registration was not required for the event.

### **Purpose of the meeting**

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To gather the public's views on the transformation proposals for the future of library services in Nottingham – Aspley Library Focus

No decisions have been made for the future of the library service. All the questions raised at the meeting will form part of the consultation report.

### **Agenda**

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1. Welcome and housekeeping (JR)
2. Presentation (DM, NH, TA)  
A presentation was delivered by the panel on the transformation proposals
3. Q&A (All)  
Participants were invited to ask questions and share comments and ideas on the proposals
4. Participants were encouraged to submit their views via the online survey <https://www.nottinghamcitylibraries.co.uk/the-next-chapter/> or complete a paper copy available in the library.  
Participants can submit any questions outside of the session via: [engage@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:engage@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

### **Presentation**

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A presentation was given to the audience and covered the following areas:

- Introduction and background to the proposals (DM)
- New library developments underway (DM)
- Drivers for change (NH)
- Library Needs Assessment - Phase 1 review and recap (NH)

- Changes being proposed (TA)

## **Question and Answer**

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- The panel responded to the questions posed by the audience
- Comments were noted but not always responded to where a direct question was not asked
- Alternative Suggestions were noted
- A record of all questions, comments and suggestions is set out below and will be added to the consultation responses
- The notes of the Q&A session are not written verbatim but are designed to capture the key points raised

### **Q: Why are you closing Aspley Library?**

**A:** There has been a significant reduction in funding from Central Government over the past decade, from £125m to £20m. Libraries haven't been touched during this time but this year, along with other services, proposals for savings have been put forward for the library service in order to achieve a balanced budget, which is a legal requirement. No decisions have been made on how these savings will be made but savings do need to be made for the library service.

### **Q: Robin Hood Energy is the reason for these closures**

**A:** When Robin Hood Energy was set up, there was wide concern that the energy supply industry was not acting in the best interests of consumers. Our motives in setting up the company were to try to tackle fuel poverty given the prevailing energy supply situation at the time and the level of fuel poverty in the city, including a reliance on pre-payment meters. There was a lot of support for the move at the time both locally and nationally. We wanted Robin Hood Energy to reduce energy prices in Nottingham and initially we achieved that. However changes introduced to the energy market meant that Robin Hood Energy like many other of the smaller energy companies were unable to compete. We very much regret that this failed and caused a cost for the Council. many others have now also failed. We closed this down and lessons on this have been learnt.

### **Q: Central Library – cost of storage of books/resources**

**A:** The storage costs for the decant of Central Library are part of the overall project costs for the new Central Library. Storage is needed to allow the sale of the building prior to the move to the new building. Where possible equipment, books and furniture that is still fit for purpose has been shared across the community libraries and/or has been kept ready for the new Central Library.

### **Q: Footfall figures seem incorrect. There are issues with literacy rates that will be impacted by these proposals to close libraries and the need to travel to sites that are further away causes traffic, travel, cost and pollution issues. The Council is not in touch with people.**

**A:** Education standards have improved and libraries are important for that. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> consultation event to listen to views on these proposals so the council can be in touch with people and listen to their views and understand the impact of the proposals.

Data used to look at library use and performance does not include library use figures during the pandemic. The data for library usage covers a number of factors including visits, active users, issues/loans, take up of computer hours and Wi-Fi access and which sites our users borrow from. The data used in the assessment, for the most recent comparisons, is for the financial year 2019/20. Due to the pandemic, libraries were closed to the public on 20th March 2020 and therefore no data was collected for the 11 days up until 31st March 2020 however, data for the past 5 years (2015/16 - 2019/20) has been taken in to account when assessing patterns of usage across all sites and not just a single year.

**Q: A member of the audience quoted the financial and user figures from the published Phase 1 report**

**A:** It is not all about cost, other factors were taken in to consideration including usage and the proximity of other community libraries. All of the data used has been published in the Phase 1 report for people to read and comment as part of this consultation.

**Q: Question to Cllr Mellen – What is your personal opinion on proposals?**

**A:** My personal opinion is I don't want to see libraries close but, as the Leader of the Council, I have a legal role to balance the budget and they are different matters. Savings are needed from the library service.

**Q: What other homework facilities would there be in the area? Lots of school children use this library after school**

**A:** We will look further in to the use of libraries for school use and homework use

**Q: How much has the Council spent on the use of consultants?**

**A:** Figures vary depending on the projects where consultant services have been employed. In some cases we need people for a short period of time, for specialist advise and expertise, and sometimes short term contracts do cost more. I don't know the exact figure across the whole Council.

**Q: Aspley is referred to as a 'deprived area' in the report. I don't think Aspley is deprived, the Library is a lovely community facility**

**A: [Notes added after the meeting]** The Indices of Deprivation are a unique measure of relative deprivation at a small local area level (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England and is used by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Indices provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small across England, based on seven different domains, or facets, of deprivation:

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability

- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation

Combining information from the seven domains produces an overall relative measure of deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This is why an area has been referred to as deprived, based on these standard measures.

**Q: Local provision is disappearing. I have a history of family use at this library and now use it as my local library. What is the criteria for picking these libraries for closure? These areas cannot afford to lose these community based centres. The people living in these areas are least likely to contest and respond to the proposals. As an English teacher I've always promoted library use and its importance for children. Why are libraries being targeted in this area?**

**A:** A range of data sets have been used to assess libraries across the network looking at geography, users, costs and accepting that savings needed to be made.

We are hearing the very powerful messages coming from the community, the strength of feeling is coming across about the need of libraries as key social spaces. How we use libraries more efficiently during quieter off peak times is one of the factors we are looking at.

**Q: Comments from a member of the audience with a background in Special Educational Needs in the nearby area. New Strelley Library, and the design of newer libraries, is not suitable for everyone. Some people don't like the big new spaces like those planned for the new Central Library. Community libraries are safes spaces, librarians with their knowledge and skills are important and this gets lost in newer libraries.**

**A:** Comments are noted

**Q: Digitalisation – pre Covid data has been used for footfall figures but data during Covid has been used for e-resources.**

**Has the review looked at the cost of lending laptops compared to cost of shutting libraries – is this a realistic option re cost? Local libraries all about relationships – children's reading challenges, children can walk to their local libraries, they have good relationship with librarians. The old Hyson Green Library when it moved to Mary Potter wasn't a good move. Mary Potter doesn't have a community feel. People's love for learning and love for books will be lost if libraries are closed.**

**A:** E-resources figures during the pandemic have been referenced but not used as a measure in assessing the use of libraries and the take up of their offer. During the pandemic we did see an increase in e-resources and on line services. However we are continuing to measure the return of people to libraries to look at how they are being used but we are still aware that Covid is a factor in this.

Funding for laptops and similar schemes comes from external sources and we have been successful in the past in accessing this type of funding. We want to expand on this and trial it.

**Q: I had no qualifications when I left school, the library helped me pick up knowledge. Technology is moving so fast and not everyone can keep up or wants this. The Council is not listening**

**A:** This is a consultation event to listen to your views. All comment are being captured and will feed in to the overall analysis of this consultation before any decision is made.

**Q: Why these libraries? Why have they been left to be run down? No effort has been put in and that is why they are being closed. I don't want to walk further to use another library, it's not safe**

**A:** Let us know any barriers, we want to understand why alternative libraries may not be the right solution.

**Q: This is not consultation, its justification – decisions have already been made**

**A:** We will be doing analysis after the consultation closes looking at all the responses from the meetings, surveys and feedback from partners and other service providers. We are continuing to look at alternatives as part of this process but we do need to make the savings. From feedback that we had at the Basford consultation event we have made contacts to open discussion about alternatives and solutions and we welcome that for all libraries, working together to find a solution that makes the savings needed.

**Q: Nottingham is a UNESCO city of literature, a number of books have been out lined as part of the jubilee celebrations, how will we read these if the libraries are closed? What alternatives are there, there must be other revenue streams? Once it's gone, it's gone**

**A:** We are looking at other revenue streams but they are for different projects and are limited, with certain criteria on how they can be used. The UK prosperity fund information has just been published and we are looking at this to see if it can help libraries.

**Q: Consideration for youth – we need places to sit and concentrate away from home for study and GCSE preparation**

**A:** We agree that it is important for young people to have a quiet space for school work

**Q: What will happen to the staff if libraries close**

**A:** No decision has been made but we have vacancies across the service that we are not recruiting to so if we need to we have capacity to relocate and keep staff if we need to make changes.

**Q: When will we know the result of consultation?**

**A:** We have a few months ahead analysing the consultation and looking in to alternative options. We will keep you updated

**Q: What will happen to these centres if they close**

**A:** An example is the Old Hyson Green library. A dance company, Take One, took on this space. If the buildings become available, we will try and find community groups who want to take them on and use them for different purposes.

**Q: A member of the Save Nottingham Libraries group referenced a number of statements recorded from the community. Transcripts can be shared by the Save Nottingham Libraries campaign group**

**A:** Please make sure all of these statements are fed in to the consultation

**Q: I'm concerned about urban decay of buildings. Beautiful buildings are important to areas.**

**Nottingham City Council is failing to fulfil it's duty to encourage people to use libraries. Better promotion of libraries is needed. They are not used because they are not promoted. Radford-Lenton Library needs better signage as no one knows it's there.**

**A:** Radford-Lenton has been there for nearly 100 years. We can look at ways to improve signage at our libraries.

**Q: Libraries are more than books, they are a safe space, places for conversations, places to help with loneliness. Not one person here has said these proposals are good. Closing libraries in working class areas cannot be supported – the consultation must show people are against this. A direct question was put to the Leader – re standing down if libraries close.**

**A:** Cllr Mellen is not making any commitment based on the outcome of the proposals. Elections are the opportunity for people to show their feeling.

**A presentation was given from a resident, Ann, titled "Transformation of our community libraries" giving alternatives to the proposal**

**The presentation has been added to the consultation responses. Key points from the presentation is included:**

- Open the libraries up to their Communities
- Library Buildings – Best use
- Realise each libraries - Assets & true potential
- Opening & current closing hours - Teams work
- 'Needs led' services for each community – Equality Report
- Holistic Approach – Bringing the services back into the communities
- Communities + Partners + NCC
- Lets Work Together
- Basford + Vernon Park = Natural in/outdoor library

- Radford / Lenton = Music & Arts library
- Aspley = Social Library (accessible space)

**Ann, a local resident, and member of Save Nottingham Libraries, noted a number of suggestions in the presentation aligned with the Phase 1 Needs Assessment Report**

- Libraries run at their normal current hours with NCC staff
- Current closing hours to be organised by the community
- Events & activities depending on each communities needs and resources
- Shared resources of all the community libraries
- Supported and funded by the community & partners
- Steering group managed - mix of community + partners reps
- Encourage & engage Interested parties and groups

**Summary of issues and comments raised:**

**The ideas listed were echoed by many at the meeting:**

- Technology isn't an option – spaces are needed for people to meet
- We don't want to lose this library, it is important for the community