

Meeting	Nottingham City Council Libraries Transformation Proposals Public Consultation Event – Radford-Lenton Library
Date & time	Monday 11 th April 2022, 6pm – 7.30pm
Venue	Radford-Lenton Library
Attendance	52
Speakers	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)
Host	Hugh White, Director of Sport & Leisure, NCC (HW)

This was the fourth public consultation session on the transformation proposals for Nottingham City Library services and first local event focused on Radford-Lenton 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.

Information about the event has been shared across local networks and organisations.

There was a peaceful protest outside of the library before the start of the meeting by the Save Nottingham Libraries campaign group.

Purpose of the meeting

To gather the public's views on the transformation proposals for the future of library services in Nottingham – Radford-Lenton 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

1. Welcome and housekeeping (HW)
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

Presentation

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

- The panel responded to the questions posed by the audience
- Questions summarise the key points raised by audience members and are not verbatim, additional comments outside of the main question were noted and are recorded at the end of this Q&A section
- 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

Q1: £60k has recently been spent on roof repairs at Radford-Lenton Library – is it good use of council funds to spend money on the library and then close it?

A: The money spent on roof repairs was covered by insurance and was necessary to make the building safe and usable following theft of lead from the roof.

Q2: Hyson Green resident: Thank you for the good library service that Nottingham City has provided and for the great staff.

Joint Service Centre (JSC) libraries are not safe and good for families due to the open access of the building. JSC are not a solution and Hyson Green Library is not a good alternative as a safe library space. Has there been any feedback on JSC use?

A: Thank you for comments about our fantastic library staff. The points regarding JSCs were noted.

Q3a: Local resident: Having visited the library, it was quiet during the afternoon but was seen to get busier after 5pm. The opening hours do not match the need of the people who want to use the library

Q3b: Staff and Counsellors have not been involved in the proposals and have been silenced, not being allowed to talk about the possible closures

A a): Previously we did look at opening hours but note the concerns being raised for consideration moving forward.

b): All library staff have been briefed about the proposals and consultation process and have been asked to promote the survey and to support people wishing to share their views if they need assistance/sign posting. Staff have been invited to consultation sessions to share thoughts and ideas and encouraged to complete the survey.

There have been long discussions with Labour Group before these proposals went out for consultation and there will be further discussions with labour councillors before any decision is made.

Q4: There has been a fantastic response from the community demonstrating the importance of community facilities in this area.

Being involved in the save John Carroll Leisure Centre campaign there is an overlap in the language and rationale for the closure proposals linked to low use.

The building of Radford-Lenton Library was jointly funded by the miners and the Carnegie Trust – working class people who valued education and culture. That still applies. Redevelop these areas, don't neglect them. Taking services away from Radford-Lenton is taking another community facility away from a deprived area.

Deprivation figures were quoted linked to health, education, income and population statistics

Labour Manifesto stated no library closures. Don't close libraries, invest in them and open them to communities, they need them.

A: Point raised were noted

Q5: Nottingham East MP, Nadia Whittome – There are no closures proposed in Nottingham East constituency but feeding back views from constituents who are users of the 3 libraries under threat of closure:

- **Concerns – impact on access to services, education and internet access are a particular concern of those already struggling and reducing access further widens existing inequality.**
- **Rhyme time session – there are families that rely solely on library for early years education for their children.**
- **People cannot afford internet access at home and rely on libraries for this**

- **The Impact of closing Basford Library while Sherwood Library is closed for redevelopment would cause more access issues**
- **Areas most affected by the proposals already face high levels of deprivation and other community services and facilities have already closed / proposed for closure (Children’s Centres, Leisure Centre, Community Centres)**
- **Central Library – access issues until the new library is open**
- **A more joined up and coordinated campaign fighting together to stop cuts from central government is needed before it creates more situations like this.**
- **Strength of feeling and impact of the closures is real**
- **Other courses of action must be on the table and remain open for discussion**

A: Thank you and noted

Q6: Chair of Nottingham City Unison branch – There are alternatives, cuts are a choice. A number of negative comments were made about the action of the Labour Party.

A: Noted

Q7: Central Library – is there a clear financial plan for the fit out of that library and when will it happen?

How much does it cost to run the 3 libraries under threat?

By exiting local buildings and as more services go remote and digital, it’s like the council are no longer part of their communities. As NCC exits and leaves it’s communities through the closure of facilities and services there are wider issues at stake

A: Community facilities and presence of the council – physical places are still important

Central Library does account for a large number users of the Cities library activity and a new central library remains really important for a big city like Nottingham. The project has been delayed but by May/June 2022 we will be able to share the plans for the fit out and projected opening. The capital funding for the fit out has been approved as part of the Council’s Capital Programme.

The financial data has been shared in the Phase 1 report which is available online on the The Next Chapter Pages and hard copies are available at all Libraries.

Q8: Hassan Ahmed Radford Ward Councillor:

Here to listen to what people have to say about the proposals? A number of points were put forward:

- **Radford is the poorest ward and Wollaton is the richest**
- **There will be nothing left if Radford-Lenton Library closes**
- **Opening hours are a problem**
- **Demographics – the books don't represent the cultural diversity of the area**
- **Surgery held here**
- **It is important that all children across the city have access to the library service, but concerns raised in taking it away from one of the poorest areas**
- **As a Councillor he will raise the profile of the proposals and argue the points at Council and with Labour group**

A: Noted

Q9: Need places you can walk in that are free, people need things. What sort of city do we want to live in. Hope – Hope less.

Welcomes the consultation – imagination rooms, talk to people before consultation Poems each time something closes Tap in to ideas in the city

How do we build hope?

A: Ideas on how the library can be saved, in partnership, are welcomed by NCC to see what could be possible at Radford-Lenton Library. Internal discussions are taking place, parallel to the consultation, looking at possible alternative options and this will continue as part of the analysis after the consultation closes.

Q10: Save Nottingham Libraries Thanked Cllr Ahmed for coming and listening to people's views

Librarian skills are important, they have collective knowledge of our city. Libraries were purpose built for children, a cathedral for learning and should remain as they are.

A: Noted

Q11: Co-chair of Area 4 Partnership – supporting grass roots and community groups in the area

The council must look at alternative solutions. Why are resources, facilities, spaces and services are being taken away from Radford and Lenton area. Why is this community experiencing this when other areas of the city aren't?

A: A range of factors have been used to assess the use of the library and need in the area including where there is access to alternative nearby library provision.

The library is significantly underused compared to other libraries across the network and there has to be a balance of where resources are used.

Q12: Working with other authorities bordering the city. Is there the possibility of sharing out library use and joining up with other library services outside of the city boundary?

A: County Libraries are ran by Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries – a charitable Community Benefit Society

Nottingham City Libraries are part of the East Midlands Libraries Consortium and benefit from savings from shared services and shared procurement opportunities obtained through the consortium.

**Q13: Sherwood Library user: Central Library – books in storage are costing £200k, near the saving required from these closure proposals
Why could Central library not have been used to store book and save cost whilst the new library is being built?**

A: NCC are in the process of selling central library on Angel Row to fund the new Central Library fit out – the council is unable to borrow any money.

The removal of books was needed in order to sell the building.

The catalogue of books from Central Library is live and books are available to order.

Q14: Decisions are not being made for the best of our communities

A: You are helping to shape decision making through this meeting and through engagement in the consultation process

Q15: 1000's of students are in the area making it a very transient and fractured community. There is a loss of community due to the changing student population. Because of this, they need stability in the community created by community hubs such as libraries.

Libraries are a hub for services and signposting. Support services linked to reducing knife crime such as education, skills and employment. All of these things are needed to keep the community alive, safe and connected.

How do we keep this community together when this library is gone?

A: A range of factors have been used to assess the use of the library and need in the area including where there is access to alternative nearby library provision.

The library is significantly underused compared to other libraries across the network and there has to be a balance of where resources are used.

Points are noted re student population.

Q16: With reference to the lack of communication regarding the future of Tennison Play Centre (Partnership Council used it).

Where space is available for these things to happen in the area. What will happen to the library if it closes and how do people get involved to put alternative ideas across?

A: Completing the survey and sharing views and ideas at the consultation meetings is how people can get connected and involved with solutions. We welcome community groups, businesses etc. to come forward if they have ideas and would like to work with the council regarding the future sustainability of the library.

Not all of the feedback at the meeting was a question. A summary of issues and comments raised is listed below:

- Opening hours don't fit with when people want to use the library – only 1 day that you can attend after school
- Footfall is low because the library isn't open when people want to use it
- The closure proposals impact significantly on people with protected characteristics
- Widening inequality by impacting areas with high levels of deprivation
- Access isn't just about distance, concerns about safety of young people walking to alternative provision
- Cost is an issue for people using public transport to travel to alternative provision
- Children can take out 24 books from a library – digital isn't the answer for young children
- Good relationship with librarians are needed if people don't have adults role models
- Complaint made by one resident to DCMS
- JSC – issues with safety in open plan buildings. Radford is a safe space.
- The Council is taking away the services of ordinary people