

B&NES Cabinet Meeting 16th July 2014 Radstock Library

Lesley Mansell Chair Radstock Town Council

Chair Councillors

I'm very concerned about the process regarding the proposed move of the library in Radstock into the Co-op.

This is an issue which affects the whole of Bath and North East Somerset not just Radstock.

I would ask all councilors to look very carefully at the information provided regarding this proposed move.

The consultation process due to end this Friday 18th of July asks what people would like to see in the library in it's new location residents have not been asked if they want to see the library moved.

Yet I have been sent a report recommending that the Radstock library is moved into the Co-op before the consultation finishes. I have great concern that this decision was made before you have had the facts presented to you.

This really does undermine the parish charter and has grave implications for the work planned by B&NES on Connecting Communities across the whole of the area.

This puts the council into a difficult position as residents loose confidence in the consultation process.

How will this council ensure that all consultations are carried out professionally and that they are meaningful and not just a paper exercise?

Radstock Town Council was also told that the move is needed to save money. 2 members of staff have already been made redundant. So how does this help regeneration?

We were also told there would be a saving. The report I have shows that very little is to be gained financially from such a move. It will cost £60,000 alone just to move the library.

I have now heard that the building won't be sold this means that it will take around 8 years to recoup the cost of the move.

What is B&NES doing to draw more funding into the area?

There is Government funding for training, some of that could be used to fund services in the library.

Radstock Town Council were also told that the benefit of moving was to have longer opening hours, however, what is known is that the post office, which has moved into a space next to that earmarked for the library, is finding it is rarely busy and that footfall is spread over the longer opening hours. Somewhat similar to pubs with longer opening hours.

What is also missed is that libraries provide more services than changing books.

Again, this affects the whole of B&NES and in particular areas with high levels of deprivation of which Radstock is one. Research shows that young people's reading levels have gone down by 25%.

Libraries play a valuable role in stimulating interest and raising horizons for young people. The support of the trained library staff is crucial as they make a difference to young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Many young people, alienated by their experiences in school will not wish to undertake formal college training either. The library can make a huge difference in their current lives, in the future and change the impact they have in our society.

All libraries should be looking to expand with a range of new services which will also meet the needs of the growing population due to the proposed house building.

If this move goes ahead it will have around 25% less space at a time when it should be expanding.

Residents are concerned that another public building, which is an asset to the community and has a central place within it, could be lost. Again, this could affect the whole of the district.

I ask that the decision be delayed until after the consultation is finished and the information has been presented.