

Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING	Council
MEETING DATE	14th September 2017
TITLE:	Save Bath Library – petition for debate
WARD:	All
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: None	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 A petition has been received – “Save Bath Library” - containing just over 5000 signatures, of which over 3000 are B&NES signatures. In line with the Council’s petition scheme, if a petition containing qualifying signatures of more than 1% of the electorate who live, work and study in Bath & North East Somerset is received, it triggers a debate at Council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That a debate takes place.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The text of the petition reads as follows;

“BANES Council are planning to move Bath Central Library from its current home in The Podium to The One Stop Shop near the bottom of Manvers Street. You can read the reasons for the move by clicking [here](#).

The new library will save BANES Council £800,000 a year and they will ‘Uphold [their] statutory duty for the provision of library services’. In layman’s terms they will do the bare minimum to ensure the public have access to library facilities.

If you could create a beautiful, functional, multi-use space, what do you think it would look like? Bath Central Library. It’s already here, upstairs in The Podium, right in the centre of our town.

The new space claims to create a modern library service, with a focus on digitalising and moving local archives to the Guildhall, splitting the resources in the library into two separate locations. This is what we will lose:

- *Parking facilities in The Podium, making Bath Central Library easily accessible to both the elderly and the disabled. The current Library can be reached directly from the carpark via lift. There are no such parking facilities at the One Stop Shop, isolating a key demographic within the community.*

- *There is a beautiful gallery space where local artists can display and sell their work. It can also double as a community space for talks and functions. The loss of this space further marginalises the already limited access to arts within our community.*
- *The breakdown of socio-economic boundaries. The Library currently offers a central space where everyone is welcome; it has comfortable chairs and a selection of daily newspapers, free to patrons. No one is excluded from using the library facilities and people from all social and economic backgrounds are able to integrate and discuss things that are important to them.*
- *A large study area, capable of seating up to 100 people. This is a vital area for local students and is used all year round as a quiet study space, located conveniently in the centre of town.*

The council wants to save money, but we need to recognise the cultural and social hub that is Bath Central Library in The Podium. We cannot continue to allow the arts and literature to be marginalised for the sake of saving. We need to nurture and encourage community engagement in a safe, central space. To lose The Podium is to lose the heart of Bath's community and cut off lots of people who are key to making a community thrive.

To close such a wonderful, useful, welcoming space is to disown something really worth something. We need to rally around here folks! Make our voices heard.....DON'T MOVE OUR LIBRARY!"

3.2 This debate is taking place during the consultation period which closes on 15th September, so any views or recommendations arising from the meeting will form a part of the consultation responses.

3.3 Council, if it wishes, can make recommendations to Cabinet but cannot amend executive policy.

3.4 The lead petitioner, Alexander Lea, or someone nominated on his behalf, will address Council at the start of the item.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The July Cabinet report outlines the financial implications of the options considered to be viable and which are now subject to consultation prior to a further report to Cabinet in October. This financial analysis was completed after the petition was submitted and the options developed take into account public feedback.

Contact person	<i>Jo Morrison, Democratic Services Manager (ext 4358)</i>
Background papers	July Cabinet report; https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/g4652/Public%20reports%20pack%2019th-Jul-2017%2016.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10
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