

I'm Caroline Ambrose, resident and founder of the Bath Novel Award.

Cabinet is looking at Bath Central Library all wrong. The days of doom and gloom have been and gone. Library services have moved onwards and upwards. Bath needs to get up to speed with this.

In 2016 the government's Libraries Taskforce launched its Libraries Ambition framework. Across the land councils who embraced it are rolling out better services, sharing new national funding and getting on with the modern council's job of bringing income in.

Bath really needs to get with the programme.

When cabinet withdrew the decision to close the Podium site, I stepped forward to help council get to grips with Libraries Ambition. Here was a way for Bath to have more for less not less for more.

The cabinet didn't answer my emails. I tried the leader. He said try the director for services. So in early March I had coffee with Ian Savigar. We talked about opportunities to innovate and draw up a range of alternatives for Bath Central Library. I invited him to join me, library users and librarians for a workshop to collectively draft a Libraries Ambition for Bath. He said yes. I was excited.

Then the cabinet and leader said no and Ian ran away. They said stuff your Libraries Ambition, innovation and income generation. Stuff library staff opinions too because they're gagged. They said our job is to cut and we're going to keep cutting whether residents like it or not. It might be bad for Bath but Bristol's worse.

My jaw's dropped quite a lot this year but I've cracked on after work with a Library Ambition for Bath. I've come to meetings monthly to highlight success stories, alternatives, and income opportunities. No cabinet member has ever followed up. After ten months of tumbleweed, my tally of completely do-able Bath Central Library income is now well past the million pound mark.

We needn't be in this room looking at a colocation bodge or closing libraries down. We could be sitting here getting all excited about Bath's Library Ambition and the list of brilliant things library staff are going to do with that no brainer million quid still going begging.

Instead, we're scrutinising whether cabinet was right to vote to borrow £3million savings my Freedom of Information requests show do not exist. Cabinet has to stop wasting our money like this.

Even if the £400k library savings did still exist, council is yet to grapple with how it's going to integrate in a site that isn't big enough. Integrating in small high footfall libraries have been a success exactly nowhere ever, despite Cllr Warrington's shocking misdirection of cabinet about that at the vote. A comparable integration this summer in Berkshire has been in the press for month and their council is now having to build an additional One Stop suite to put it right. Trust me, if you think people are cheesed off now you need to hear what happened there.

This panel has a chance to ask cabinet to stop that happening here. Please do Bath proud.