

This last week I have been thinking about the letter P. P stands for POLITICS, lets forget about that today. The issue is far too important. It also stands for POUNDS which understandably you have spent a lot of time thinking about. Lastly it stands for PEOPLE. Public Services are about People every single one of us that you have been elected to serve. the old the young and everywhere in between.

4 years ago the Council invested in a Community Library Hub in Paulton with extended opening hours when the Hub would be staffed by Volunteers. Gradually we have built a vibrant busy community amenity. The Council didn't do that WE DID, PEOPLE . However, you provided the tools – a central accessible converted building at the heart of the village. The much needed combination of a Library with a small Cafe. The technology and Support which enables us to be part of the Libraries network. The People provided a team of Volunteers, additional activities, a cafe owner who also acts as Volunteer Support. Together we fulfilled the Council vision of a Community Library Hub a social centre for all ages a focal point for the village. Indeed it is still on the BANES website as a model of a Community Run Library.

But You are not asking us to take over a going concern that we have built together You propose to take all that away. Oh No, you say we are not proposing to Close Libraries. Well let me tell you that on your present funding proposals a community devolved Library in Paulton would mean

- No accessible premises in the centre of the Village**
- No cafe**
- No Computers /Wifi printing facilities or ICT support if we sourced our own hardware.**
- No Kiosk essential for Library networking and independent customer use when unmanned**

And probably NO Volunteers – our team of Volunteers are proud to be part of a strong busy vibrant Amenity which they have helped to build. But if that goes so will they! They will not give up their time to sit in a room somewhere in Paulton with a handful of Books, waiting for someone to come through the door. That is not even a second class service it is NO service at all. Meanwhile the centre of Paulton dies a little.

If we want more we have to fund it ourselves, aah yes P for POUNDS! Asking the people of Paulton to fund the running of their own library is setting us up to fail. It is passing the pain onto the people least able to bear it. Local Funding will mean a higher local precept for the people of Paulton who will continue to fund Town Libraries thereby paying twice for one service. However according to Councillor Warrington Higher Taxes aren't necessary we could fund our Library through "matched or Crowd funding.

For the uninitiated, matched funding means this . A few people in Paulton who are able, like myself will bake cakes, sell raffle tickets busk in the street or (heaven Forbid) run a Marathon and the rest of Paulton residents will be expected to put their hands in their pockets and contribute. We then look for a large business or wealthy benefactor to match our efforts. Paulton is awash with those! Whichever way you look at it a community with predominantly modest or low incomes will be paying for a facility that they need more than many people in BANES .

If you leave us to sink and swim with a few thousand as a start up (only) and the proceeds of a sponsored walk then our Libraries will disappear and you would be in serious breach of your statutory duty and Paulton will be a sadder place. Is that what you want?

I know we can make Volunteer Staffed Libraries work. With proper support we can extend our Volunteer role thereby saving some of those POUNDS but don't waste all our efforts by making us start again. I know one size doesn't fit all. But what is common to us all is that we are communities of PEOPLE not a number on a balance sheet So I ask you to at the very least defer your decision until you have talked to us and come and seen what we have achieved. Consult with PEOPLE not politicians honestly and openly to produce an innovative made to measure Library Service for ALL our communities which is funded by ALL.