

Items Tabled at Meeting, SSCSC 5.11.18, item 4 Budget Cuts Proposals

Dear Cllr. Pauline Morrison, Chair of Lewisham Safer Stronger Select Committee,
Cc. Members of the Committee

I would like to pose an important question to be raised at the **Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on Monday, 5th November, 2018 7.00 pm**. The question concerns budget cuts proposals: **COM 11 Hub Libraries cuts to staffed opening hours**.

It is proposed that £450,000 is cut from the library service budget via one of two implementation methods:

Option 1) – remove library staff from Downham and Deptford making these self-service facilities with occasional support from the peripatetic team.

Option 2) – reduce staffed opening hours across Downham, Deptford and Lewisham by 45% from 64 hours per week to 35 hours per week. The buildings would remain open on a self-service basis outside those hours, although access in Lewisham would be restricted to the ground floor.

This is quoted verbatim from [04Appendix2CommunityServicesProfomasCutsproposals](#) proforma.

As outlined in the council's own Service Equalities Impact Indicator, it is predicted the proposals will have a profoundly negative effect on vulnerable user groups and contribute to a rise in anti-social behaviour. My question is posed in three parts:

Can the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee justify continuing with these proposed cuts, when unstaffed/reduced-staffed libraries are likely to:

- a) **Lead to LBL failing to pay due regard to its public sector statutory duties, given that Equalities Impact Assessments would be likely to demonstrate further serious issues;**
- b) **put remaining facilities staff and members of the public at risk; and**
- c) **be in breach of the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) stipulation that it is the statutory "duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof"?**

I pose this question from several pertinent subject positions:

- as a long-term Lewisham resident (SE6, Lewisham East);
- as a former Librarian employed by Lewisham Library and Information Service (2016-17);
- as a Lecturer at Goldsmiths College with a recent sociology doctorate on the topic of the negative implications of cuts to public library services for UK society (a thesis which includes London Borough of Lewisham as an empirical case study); and
- as a member of the Save Lewisham Campaign group, on behalf of whom I pose this question.

I ask that Members to refer this matter to the Public Accounts Committee.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the SSC Select Committee meeting in person on Monday as I am out of the country. My campaign colleague Caroline Jupp (also a Lewisham resident, copied here) is able to attend and raise the question on behalf of the campaign group if this would be permissible.

Please can you assure me that this question will be read out and given due consideration at the Select Committee proceedings? I would be very grateful if you could keep me informed on the deliberations.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Alice Corble

Extract from referral from OSC meeting of 30th October 2018

COM 12: Cuts to main grants budget

- 3.1 It is clear that a number of other proposed budget cuts are reliant, to some extent, on the Voluntary and Community Sector meeting needs that are currently being met by council funded provision. The Committee was therefore of the opinion that this proposal should not be progressed until an analysis has been carried out of the impact that this will have on the sector's capacity to meet the additional need that might be generated from other proposed budget cuts, should they be accepted.

COM 14: Local Assemblies Fund

- 3.4 The Committee felt that this proposal was not yet fully worked up and clarification on the exact parameters within which Neighbourhood CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money could be spent was required. Members felt that it might be helpful if the proposal to remove or reduce Local Assembly funding was disaggregated from the mitigating proposal for Local Assemblies to be involved in spending Neighbourhood CIL money.