

# Bramley Parish Council

Serving the community since 1894



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Clerk: Mrs Rachael Hill

17<sup>th</sup> February 2011

To: Members of the Select Committee from Bramley Parish Council  
c.c. Dr Andrew Povey, Cllr David Munro all other Surrey County Councillors,  
David McNulty, Chief Executive, Surrey County Council,  
Mary Orton, Chief Executive, Waverley Borough Council,  
Surrey Advertiser

Dear Colleagues,

## **Potential closure of Libraries**

As you will be aware from our earlier letter to all Surrey County Councillors, Bramley Parish Council has been very concerned about your Cabinet's decision to endorse, without change or challenge, the PVR on the Library Service. The Libraries Officer's response to the call-in does answer some questions and reinforces many concerns. It is astonishing that the Cabinet did not even have this information in front of it when it made the decision.

In short, our concerns are: -

- No consideration whatsoever of more radical alternatives for the whole service, such as inviting, for example, Library Systems and Services (LSSI) to take over the service. Twelve other library Authorities are reported to be in serious talks with this company (Sunday Times). The conclusion of the PVR appeared to be 'business as usual' so long as some smaller libraries can be excluded.
- Absolutely no prior consultation with the communities that will be affected by the apparent ultimatum to eleven libraries to find volunteers or have the library close, and no publication, to date (despite this having been promised at Cabinet), of any of the data used. This leads to the conclusion that the study did not wish to invite any challenge.
- A flawed and incomplete set of criteria for selection clearly already biased in favour of town centre libraries, with a weighting system designed to ensure that the current hierarchy was maintained. "Libraries in Priority Places" were even excluded from any consideration.
- The criteria seemingly taking no account of rural needs (nothing new there then), the economics of local rural communities or the extra travelling occasioned when a rural library is closed.

It seems to us that the decision is unsafe in that it relied upon an incomplete and flawed report. The Review Team should be asked to start again.

We have not commented upon the closure of the Mobile library Service, since that does not visit Bramley. However we do know that other rural communities in Waverley, and we suspect elsewhere are very concerned about this. There is a link with Bramley, since Waverley villages currently receiving the mobile library, risk also not having their next nearest library closed as well.

Having said that, it is very helpful to have, for the first time, a clear statement of what the division of responsibilities would be in a "Community Partnered Library".

We should say, again, that in principle Bramley is not against the supplementing of a professional core of librarians with volunteers to maintain service levels while still achieving cost reductions. However the proposal fails to consider anything other than an either/or model, proposes no pilot to determine whether even such a mixed model would be workable, let alone a fully volunteer model, and fails to address the potential for increasing volunteering across all libraries to achieve David Hodge's stated primary Big Society aim of growing community cultural centres while maintaining service at all libraries.

We do hope that your committee will request that the Cabinet revisit the decision and postpone it until a more satisfactory report, including a dialogue with LSSI has taken place.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue O'Connell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

Sue O'Connell

**Bramley Parish Council Chairman**