

SUTTON COLDFIELD DISTRICT COMMITTEE – 3rd July 2017

Sutton Coldfield library – Update as of June 2017

A 3 month consultation on the future of Birmingham's community libraries commenced in October 2016 and the responses helped shape the model that was subsequently agreed by Cabinet in February 2017.

The original proposals included the planned closure of Sutton Coldfield Library, but strong representation plus the emergence of a potential model for retaining library services at the Red Rose site enabled Cabinet to take the decision to see if a sustainable business model could be put together by the end of August 2017.

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council has taken a decision to fund the day to day operations of the library from April to August (subject to certain conditions being met, up to £150,000) whilst it is concluded whether or not a sustainable business plan can be achieved.

In order to reduce running costs to circa £360,000 per annum the library moved to a 35 hour per week operation. It should be noted that this is a considerable reduction on the 2016/17 running costs of over £550,000 but still significantly greater than the average running costs proposed in the new model of £107,000 for a Tier 1 library.

Running costs for a sustainable library therefore need to reduce further than the £360,000 p.a. currently projected.

The focus of the sustainable business plan has included:

1. Securing a home for the Local History and Archive collection within Sutton Coldfield
 2. Repairs to the building to ensure it is watertight
 3. Internal decorations/repairs
 4. Negotiations with Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council to secure a financial solution
 5. Letting of floor 2
 6. Sharing of floor 1 so that it forms two thirds library and one third let for a complimentary usage by another party.
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1. .All Archive material was returned from storage and the Inventory was checked.
 - We purchased additional bespoke shelving for the area known as the flat and for both Stacks – one on floor 1 and the other on floor 2, as well as getting the rolling shelving in the Stacks repaired.
 - The Local History and archive collection is now totally contained within the library and remains accessible to library users and residents via requests to library staff.
 2. The City Council has invested significantly in works to make the building water tight including:
 - Following a detailed Inspection a number of repairs have been made to the roof
 - Glass canopy removal and reinstatement
 - Inspection and repairs to internal downpipes which caused the leaks in the Reference and Children's areas

3. Internal refurbishment and repairs

- Internal leaks have been repaired
- Stained ceiling tiles have been repaired/placed throughout the building.
- The heating is now fully working and connected to and controlled by Lancaster Circus, this will ensure the building is a comfortable temperature throughout.

4. Joint working on delivering a sustainable business plan

- The City Council and the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council have undertaken significant dialogue regarding the financial requirements to a) fund the period required to explore/develop a sustainable business plan for a library in the Red Rose Centre b) review the financial requirements that would fall on both parties as part of a sustainable business plan going forward.
- As a result funding has been made available by Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council until the end of August by which time a sustainable solution will be needed or the library will close.
- During this time the city council has demonstrated its commitment to maximising the opportunities for a solution to be reached by investing more than £50,000 in internal repairs and making the building water tight.

5. We are in final discussions with a prospective tenant for the whole of floor 2.

- It is a fundamental part of the sustainable business plan for the second floor to be let. It is the resources raised through letting this space that allow the City Council to invest the average costs of running a Tier 1 library into the Sustainable Business Plan for Sutton Library

6. Sharing of floor 1

- The sustainable business plan is based upon one reducing the library running costs incurred at floor 1 by having a partner utilise one third of the space and consequentially cover one third of the costs of utilities, business rates, rent, etc.
- There has been considerable dialogue with a number of stakeholder and partners to identify a service offering that could occupy one third of the current library space, generate significant income (to cover an appropriate share of the running costs of the building) but also be complementary to the library offer. As a result a Market Sounding exercise was commenced at the start of June seeking organisations who may want to be interested in delivering café, play, office or other complimentary services. Following the Market Sounding exercise and appropriate procurement route will be decided upon to secure the best possible solution/contribution to the sustainable business plan.

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