

Branch Chair. Rose Brown
Branch Secretary. Caroline Johnson



the public service union

Birmingham Branch

The McLaren Building
46 The Priory Queensway
Birmingham, B4 7LR

t 0121 200 3331

f 0121 236 3221

w www.Birminghamunison.co.uk

**RE: UNISON RESPONSE TO PROPOSED CUTS TO
COMMUNITY LIBRARIES**

January 13th 2017

Dear Chris

Further to our letter dated 25.11.16. UNISON has the following response to clarify our proposals

- **We do not want a tiered library service.**
We want a single comprehensive service that everyone can access
- **We believe that the priority should be to protect frontline!! staff.**
- **We do not want libraries to be asset transferred to a third party who have no experience of providing a comprehensive library service**
- **We do not believe that these groups can run an unbiased service to all sections of the public and will undermine the professionalism of library staff.**
- **We do not accept the use of volunteers to replace paid, experienced staff who provide a comprehensive service to everyone who want to access the library service**
- **We do not accept the closure of Sutton and Aston Library and the possible closure of libraries in the proposed tier 3.**
- **We do not believe that the investment in self-service and other technology will benefit our members or library users and that the money should be better spent to invest in staff and buildings to provide a comprehensive library service.**

Continuation....

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We do not believe that the standardisation of staffing levels is workable. One size does not fit all.

UNISON therefore proposes:

1. That the 2 CLSU posts are used to fund frontline services which is always been a priority for the Council.

Given the proposed reintegration with the library of Birmingham we believe that Lob could provide the strategic support for community libraries.

We do not believe that volunteers should replace library staff, therefore we do not require a volunteer co-ordinator and during the last restructure of Lob this post was deleted.

We also propose that Library managers fulfil the role of bringing in funding to the service and therefore do not require a separate post to oversee this.

This equates to approx. £78k This money could be used towards saving the GR1 posts, a further £9k from the proposed agency budget could be used to secure the rest of the budget for GR1 staff.

UNISON believes that putting the Saturday assistants back into the structure is important so that other library staff are not required to work every Saturday. Lunch time assistants could be given the opportunity to move to any vacant posts.

2. That the proposed 100k for supply is used to fund additional posts in libraries where the need more than 3 staff for health and safety reasons and provision of the library service. In particular Acocks Green, South Yardley, Yardley Wood, Harborne, Weoley Castle, Sparkhill, Handsworth, Erdington, Mere Green, Perry Common, Northfield and Sutton Library. There needs to be a robust risk assessment process.
3. UNISON is disappointed that despite numerous requests for the risk assessments for all libraries that these have not been provided when the deadline for the end of the consultation is approaching and the proposals include working on 3 staff.

Continuation....

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....Continuation 3

4. We also propose that the agencies providing supply should no longer be used as they have proved to be expensive and unsuccessful. Alternatively each library should have a list of supply pool both internal and external that can be contacted by each library. This could be co-ordinated by the library managers.
5. UNISON is opposed to proposal to outsource the tier 3 libraries, however if the decision is made to implement this UNISON is opposed to the 90 hours of City Council staffing being proposed to support them and that this staffing would be better deployed to support the City Council libraries. In regards to proposals for Glebe Farm library and Kents Moat library UNISON believes that Glebe Farm should be put into tier 2 as there is no tier 2 proposed for this ward and that the resources planned to relocate Kents Moat would be better spent on Glebe Farm, especially as the shopping centre where Kents Moat is situated is due to be demolished and will not be rebuilt for some time.
6. In regard to the proposals for Selly Oak and Stirchley, UNISON proposes that library provision is provided from the current location as it is a proposed tier 2 library and not moved into the swimming baths where the facilities for library provision are not at the same level as the current site, especially as it is proposed that Selly Oak library would be a tier 3 library. In regards to the boiler issues at Stirchley library monies from the £174k could be used to replace this. Should Selly Oak library building be sold monies from this sale could be used to improve Stirchley library's facilities.
7. We propose that the money the Council has found to invest in self-service should be used to fund library staff and library buildings. Self-service machines are already in place in District libraries. We cannot see the justification for spending such a huge amount of money on replacing machines that are already in place. UNISON is concerned about the extra work that the use of self service will create for its members as well as the removal of counters.

Continuation....

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....Continuation 4

8. It is concerned about the health and safety implications for its members who will be working on less staff.

UNISON therefore proposes that the counters remain in libraries even as they provide a safe area for staff and should verification be implemented in libraries, this could be carried out at the counter proving a safe are for staff to work from.

UUNISON would also encourage senior managers to impress on Councillors that the £174k a year investment would be better invested in library staffing and buildings rather than self service

9. We propose that any remaining funds from the money originally allocated to rebuild West Heath should be used to pay the costs of Sutton Library in order to keep it open until a decision is made about the development of the Red Rose Centre and ensure that any future development includes provision of a library service for the community.

If alternative proposals and funds are found to keep Sutton library open UNISON believes it should be staffed by a grade 4, 1 grade 3 and 2 grade 2s.

10. We propose that deprivation factor be given a higher priority weighting to ensure that deprived areas of the city are not disadvantaged as they appear to be in these proposals. This has been emphasised at the recent public consultation meetings that local people have attended. We need an assurance that this will happen.

11. In regards to verification UNISON does not believe that the current or proposed job descriptions allow for staff to carry out this additional responsibility and believe that changes to the job descriptions would need to be made if library staff are required to carry out verification. In addition this additional responsibility does not meet any of the Reading agencies universal offers described in the business case.

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....Continuation 5

UNISON members are opposed to verification but IF this is implemented they believe that all libraries not just tier 1 libraries should be offering this service in order to ease the pressure on the staff in tier 1 libraries.

If library staff are required to take on this additional responsibility UNISON believes that the list of expectations that library staff are supposed to deliver are reviewed as they will not be able to do this level of work and take on the additional work of varication.

12. We also propose that a charge for Netloan should be introduced after 1 free hour a day which we believe should be used to mitigate those posts at risk as well as fund additional posts.

13. We also propose that you explore the possibility of charging for stationary requested by the public as a form of income generation and standardise room hire charges.

I look forward to your response to our proposal and comments.

Yours sincerely

P. Hands

Philippa Hands

UNISON Senior Steward for Place

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