

Cabinet, 5 February 2025

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE – COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET ON LIBRARIES CONSULTATION

Following its meeting on 3 February 2025, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee submits the following comments and recommendation to Cabinet and requests that Cabinet responds to these at its meeting on 5 February 2025.

The Sub-Committee sought assurance that the EQHIA is correct. This followed a Member query about discrepancies between the EQHIA and Action plan.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet delay the decision until a second consultation has been carried out, presenting the proposal to close three libraries to the public, as has taken place in other parts of the country. And that the Officer benchmark what is best practice.
2. That, following the formation of the Friends Group of Harold Wood library, who are seeking funding, the Cabinet delay the decision to close Harold Wood library in order that the group might have time to secure funding
3. That the Cabinet seek the opinion of the 151 Officer on whether savings made elsewhere could be used to offset the overspend generated by keeping the libraries open, and whether that would satisfy the CIPFA report and MHCLG with regards to the Capitalisation Directive
4. That the Cabinet explore and outline what work needs to be undertaken to ensure that the remaining libraries do not fall into disrepair and be threatened with closure
5. Cost Breakdown – that Cabinet defer decision until further information is provided on both revenue and capital costs.