

Agenda Item 5.3: East Sussex Libraries Consultation Update

Councillors,

I do not believe that East Sussex Council have seen the paper this Parish Council reviewed last month, or are yet aware of the resolutions we passed at last month's Council meeting.

However, I have received a response following the enquiries I made in conjunction with the production of that paper from Mr Nick Skelton, *Assistant Director, Communities, Economy & Transport*, who I understand is leading East Sussex Council's Libraries Consultation.

Within this response Mr Skelton has not provided any additional information with regards to the Community Library Membership we discussed, but has said that *"the County Council planned to provide more information about the proposed Community Library Membership in the amended draft strategy when it returns to Cabinet in March 2018"*.

Mr Skelton has kindly asked for thoughts about how the Community Library Membership service could be of benefit and work for Hurst Green. I have therefore contacted Mr Skelton's office to setup a meeting to discuss this, with him or his team and would ask for the views of this Council on whether this would be appropriate and if so as to the proposed agenda, likewise this Council's view in relation to our possibly approaching the Community Cafe or Village Hall Committee to explore this.

Also contained within Mr Skelton's email was the County Council's position regarding the cancellation of the mobile library, which does seem, as I highlighted to Councillors in the paper I presented last month appear to be predetermined.

The response from Mr Skelton on this is as follows:

"The role of the Mobile Library Service has been carefully considered as part of a total package of access to a modern and sustainable library service for East Sussex, including access for residents of rural areas. We considered carefully whether the Mobile Library Service should remain and our conclusion was that with increasing access to internet provision and reasonable journey times to the library buildings we propose to retain, including for those travelling from rural parts of the county, we would be able to still provide a very high level of access to the service county-wide and in accordance with our statutory responsibilities without it.

We recognise that the impact of the proposals is likely to be greater for key groups, including those who are over 75, people with disabilities and some people in rural communities. Appropriate mitigations would be in place for these groups, specifically the Home Library Service, for people who cannot visit a library due to disability, frailty or caring responsibilities, and the eLibrary and the proposed network of library buildings. The Community Library Membership is a way that we consider we can help particularly rural communities who want to play an active role in maintaining, and indeed extending, the reach of library materials in hard copy into rural local communities."

Councillor Brown

Hurst Green Parish Council

November 2017