

Full Council
14 November 2017



Report of: Shahzia Daya, Service Director – Legal & Democratic Services

Title: **Petition debate – “Bristol needs libraries”**

Ward: Citywide

Recommendation

That Full Council debates the petition and refers it to the Mayor / relevant Cabinet member for a formal response.

Summary

Under the Council’s petitions scheme, where a petition has 3,500 or more signatures from people who live, work or study in Bristol, the petition organiser can request a Full Council debate.

The Council has received a petition entitled “Bristol needs libraries”

The petition organiser has requested that Full Council debates the petition.



Details of the petition

1. The wording of the petition is as follows:

Petition title / subject: "Bristol needs libraries"

Petition wording:

"We call on the Mayor, Cabinet and Council to reconsider current plans for the library service and to extend the consultation which is now underway, in both time and scope. The current, limited, consultation is not fit for purpose. All of the options it offers would result in the withdrawal of funding from 17 libraries, causing irreversible damage to a vital service. We urge the Council to reconsider the level of savings required from this service and to seek additional resources to make such drastic cuts unnecessary."

Additional comments / background information from petition organiser:

"Libraries have the ability to support the transformation of individuals, communities and society as a whole. The range of outcomes they help to achieve is substantial and varied, and the Government is therefore committed to ensuring that there remains a strong library service.' (Department of Culture, Media and Sport). Bristol is presenting a plan to close 17 out of its 27 libraries and to reduce stock development and promotion, reader engagement and children's work. This would leave a severely reduced service, out of the reach of many. An accessible network of libraries is vital for the range of community services which are currently provided and which could continue to be developed. Many communities are offered no choice at all – 13 libraries would be closed and seven kept open under all options presented – and no choice is being offered on opening hours. The consultation is taking place over the summer period, which is likely to limit overall participation and which excludes students who are important users of the service. The format of this consultation fails to enable the public to express their views about the nature, location and funding of the library service for the future."

2. The petition organiser is Jill Kempshall.
3. The petition secured 4447 signatures meeting the petition scheme criteria.
4. The Full Council is asked to debate the petition.
5. Under the petition scheme, the petition organiser is permitted up to 5 minutes to present and speak to the petition. The petition scheme allows a further period of up to 15 minutes for discussion of the petition by councillors at the Full Council meeting.
6. The Full Council has agreed the following in relation to dealing with petitions with over 3500 signatures: The topic of the debate should be referred to the Mayor/Cabinet, or other relevant body with the petitioner's views and Full Council's views.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the debate, the Full Council is recommended to refer the petition to the Mayor, in order that the Mayor can consider his response, in liaison with the relevant Cabinet member.