

## **Slough Borough Council**

**Report To:** Council

**Date:** 24 April 2025

**Subject:** Petition – "Save Cippenham and Langley Libraries at Slough from Proposed Public Consultation"

**Chief Officer:** Sue Butcher,  
Executive Director Children's Services

**Contact Officer:** Liz McMillan, Locality Hubs and Library Services  
Manager

Colin J Sweeney, Head of Democratic Services  
and Scrutiny

**Ward(s):** Cippenham and Langley

**Exempt:** No

**Appendices:** None

### **1. Summary and Recommendations**

1.1 This report sets out the details of a Petition titled "Save Cippenham and Langley Libraries at Slough from Proposed Public Consultation", which has been received under the Council's Petitions Scheme. The petition is before the Council this evening and received a total of 1,939 signatures. An additional 89 signatures were received via a paper petition submitted in line with the closing date of this ePetition. This now brings the total amount of signatures to 2,028.

1.2 The Council is invited to review and agree its course of action in relation to the petition.

#### **Recommendations:**

Following the debate, the Council is asked to resolve what action it wishes to take with regard to the Petition, noting the service officer's recommendation provided below:

Council is recommended to:

- (i) Note the e-petition and that a decision on the future of library services is an executive function and on the forward plan for Cabinet for May 2025.
- (ii) Recommend to Cabinet that the e-petition should be included in the evidence considered to inform its decision on libraries.

## Reasons

Article 17 of the Council's constitution contains the petition scheme. This confirms that where the threshold is met for a Council debate, if the issue is one on which the Council's Executive (Cabinet) is required to make, the final decision the Council will decide is whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. Full Council has no power to direct Cabinet to make a specific decision, but it can make recommendations.

Cabinet is expected to make a decision taking account of all relevant information, including consultation results and this petition.

## Commissioner Review

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners and there are no specific comments to add.

## 2. Report

- 2.1 This report advises the Council of a Petition – Save Cippenham and Langley Libraries, which was received by the Council in March 2025.
- 2.2 The Council's Petition Scheme states that if a petition receives 1,500 or more valid signatures, the petition will be debated at a full Council meeting.
- 2.3 The Petition has surpassed the threshold of triggering a debate at full Council and contains **2,028** signatories, comprising of 1993 collected via an e-petition on the Council's website and 89 from a paper version of the petition collated by the Petition Organiser.
- 2.4 The Petition text reads as follows:

***We, the undersigned, petition the Council that residents of Cippenham, Langley and Slough, strongly oppose the Council's proposal to close Cippenham and Langley Libraries, since the Council has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to local communities.***

***Libraries help to promote reading from a young age, and they can connect with others who share similar interests, and develop social skills such as communication, empathy and collaboration.***

***Libraries can help children develop lifelong skills and can be a place for independent learning and personal and social development. Children can connect with others who share similar interests, and develop social skills like communication, empathy, and collaboration.***

***Below are some of the key benefits.***

- ***pre-literacy skills including speech, language and communication development***
- ***mental health support for adults and children***
- ***reducing social isolation and creating networks and friendships***
- ***access to information, skills development and learning for adults***

- *not everyone has the same access and funds for the internet, computers and printing.*

***We urge the Council to reconsider/dismiss the proposal i.e. Option 2:***

***“Maintain library services in Britwell and The Curve and close Cippenham and Langley library buildings”***

### **3. Supporting Information for Debate**

- 3.1 The Petition Organiser has been invited to the Council meeting to speak on the Petition (up to five minutes) and the Petition will then be discussed by Members of the Council for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Mayor has discretion to extend this time taking account of the degree of public interest in the issue, the level of support given to the petition and the number of elected members wishing to express their views on the subject.
- 3.2 Following this discussion, the Council will need to decide what action to take with regard to the Petition. As this matter relates to an executive function, the Council can only decide whether to make recommendations to Cabinet since it (the Council) has no power to make a decision on an executive function.
- 3.3 The Scheme indicates that the Council's response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it but may include one or more of the following (for executive functions, these could be formal recommendations to Cabinet).
  - Taking the action requested in the Petition.
  - Considering the Petition at a Council Meeting.
  - Holding an Inquiry.
  - Commissioning relevant research.
  - Organising a public meeting.
  - Mounting a wider public consultation.
  - Meeting with the Petition Organiser or representatives of signatories.
  - Providing a written response outlining the Council's views on the subject.
  - Referring the issue to the Council's Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee **OR**
  - Referring the issue to the relevant Committee/Cabinet.
  - Consulting statutory partners and local service providers.
  - Instigating discussions with the voluntary and community sectors; and
  - Making representations to Commercial or other Interests.
- 3.4 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 the Council has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.
- 3.5 Slough Borough Council operates a library service across four main buildings in Britwell, Curve, Cippenham and Langley with an online offer and no mobile service. Cippenham and Langley libraries offer access to books for adults and children, online reading resources, computers with internet, as well as a programme of events and activities for adults and children.
- 3.6 Cippenham opening hours have reduced from 48 hours a week to 24 hours a week, which includes two Saturdays a month.

- 3.7 Langley opening hours have reduced from 48 hours a week to 30 hours a week, which includes two Saturdays a month.
- 3.8 Customer services also provide an appointment-based service from Cippenham and Langley during opening hours.
- 3.9 Library staff work across all four sites and are not site specific.
- 3.10 During 2023/24 financial year Cippenham and Langley had between them 27,180 and 46,691 visitors, which was a reduction of 75% and 66% compared to 2019/20. The opening hours of Cippenham have reduced by 52% since 2022 and Langley by 39%.
- 3.11 The annual maintenance costs for Cippenham and Langley are approximately £139,000. These costs do not take into account any emergency repairs or build cost inflation, Cippenham has ongoing costs related to roof issues with a recent initial spend of £20k to repair an emergency leak.
- 3.12 In December 2024, it was agreed at Cabinet to undertake a public consultation on the future delivery model of Slough library service, including making changes to Cippenham and Langley buildings. At this stage, no decision has been made to close Cippenham or Langley. Therefore, the first request in the petition to reverse the decision appears to be based on a misunderstanding as to what decision has been made. To inform any future decision by Cabinet, it is accepted that the results of the public consultation will be presented to Cabinet with recommendations based on those results. Cabinet would need to have all relevant information to inform a decision on the Cippenham and Langley Libraries, including results of the public consultation, equality impacts, legal framework for services, financial implications of alternative options and proposed future delivery model.
- 3.13 SBC remains fully committed to maintaining a vibrant library service in Slough and it recognises the invaluable role that the libraries play in fostering community engagement, promoting literacy, and providing a welcoming space for residents of all ages.
- 3.14 The Council provides a strong and effective library service for the future. The Council values highly the input of its community members, and their dedication to preserving this essential resource has not gone unnoticed.
- 3.15 In January 2025, at a meeting of the full Council, an amended motion was agreed to continue with the public consultation and use the responses and feedback from residents and members to design a library service for the future.
- 3.16 The 10-week public consultation on library services closed on 25 February 2025. During the consultation, over 1,150 responses were received to the survey, and more than 2,000 additional comments were submitted via other channels, including free text questions in the survey, public drop-in sessions and email responses. Formal responses from MPs and partners were received and the Council appreciates the level of engagement, and the diverse feedback shared during this time.

- 3.17 The e-petition will be considered as part of the wider process, alongside the detailed responses received during the consultation. The Council is committed to analysing all the feedback thoroughly to ensure that any recommendations take into account the views of residents, including those who submitted detailed responses to the survey, attended public drop-in sessions and contributed through email.
- 3.18 The Council is fully aware of how valuable library services are to residents and is dedicated to ensuring that any changes made will enhance the services the Council provides. The recommendations, which will address the future of library services, will be carefully considered and included in a report to Cabinet on 19 May. This report will outline the rationale behind the decisions made, as well as the future proposals for library services.

#### **4. Implications of the Recommendation**

##### **3.1 Financial Implications**

The December Cabinet report contained information on the budget for libraries and the cost of the buildings. Financial implications will be included in any future report to Cabinet.

##### **3.2 Legal Implications**

- 3.2.1 Slough Borough Council adopted a petition scheme in July 2010. This Petition meets the criteria listed in the [Council's Petition Scheme](#).
- 3.2.2 Under the Council's published Petitions Scheme a Petition that contains 1,500 signatures triggers a debate at Council.
- 3.2.3 Any decision in relation to service delivery with Cippenham and Langley and use or disposal of the building are executive functions. Full Council does not have the power to direct Cabinet in relation to an executive function and to purport to do so, would be an unlawful interference by Full Council in the proper role of Cabinet. Full Council can make recommendations to Cabinet and any recommendations should be considered alongside other relevant information.
- 3.2.4 A library service is a statutory function of the Council, and the Council would need to follow a fair and lawful process when making decisions to change service delivery for these functions. When making any decision about a library service, the Council needs to consider all relevant information, including legal and financial implications, equality implications and the results of any consultation.

##### **Risk Management Implications**

The risks relating to any decision on the library service will be set out in a future Cabinet report.

##### **Environmental implications**

Details of the building cost and environmental impact of any decision will be set out in a future Cabinet report.

### Equality implications

- 3.5.1 The Equality Act duties apply to the Council when changing service provision and disposing of assets. The Council has not made a decision on Cippenham and Langley or on alternative ways of delivering services within them. At the time of such decisions, the Equality Act duties will need to be considered.

### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers arising from this report.