



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Lisa Smart
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1st October 2020

Cllr Elise Wilson, Leader of the Council
Pam Smith, Chief Executive

Dear Elise and Pam

Decision regarding One Stockport Hub in Stockport Town Centre coming to Cabinet

I write with respect to the report going to the Cabinet Meeting on 6th October 2020 regarding the One Stockport Hub on behalf of the Liberal Democrat members of the Corporate, Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny Committee (CRMG).

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 22nd September 2020, Members raised concerns about the consultation proposed with relation to this decision.

It became clear during discussion of this report that the proposal includes the permanent closure of the Central Library, which has been open for 107 years following a Carnegie endowment. This is not mentioned in the current consultation, which only mentions services moving. This means residents are not able to express their view of whether the Central Library should close.

Noting the sensitivities around libraries and the requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (as amended), we fear that the consultation breaches the "Gunning principles" on consultations, in that the decision to close the Central Library appears to have already been made and residents are offered no information about this and not given an opportunity to express their view about it.

On this basis, it is our concern that the consultation may be open to legal challenge and, thus, there is a risk to the Council that the decision itself could be challenged.

We are also concerned that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, that the Cabinet undertake further work on the future of Central Library building and to undertake a further round of consultation on that basis, has been given scant regard. Whilst the overwhelming resolution of the committee is reflected at section 8 of the report, no further action is proposed.

I would observe that there is little point bringing items through pre-decision scrutiny if the overwhelming resolution of a cross-party Scrutiny Committee is to be ignored in this way. Officers were going to go away and work out a process and timeline, but none of this has happened and the report to Cabinet just seeks agreement to continue as originally planned.

I ask that this letter be published as a supplement to the agenda for the meeting to draw it to both Cabinet Members' attention and that of the public, and I ask that the Cabinet properly consider the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee and reflect on the risks involved before simply soldiering on.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Smart". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Councillor Lisa Smart