

## CLOSURE OF SANDERSTEAD LIBRARY

Sanderstead Residents' Association are extremely worried and disappointed at the recent news that our only local authority community asset, our much-loved library, is proposed for closure.

The library is at the heart of our community, locally listed in the shape of an open book, with a beautiful horse chestnut tree (with a tree preservation order) adorning its entrance, a memorial plaque on the outside wall to a 'Mr Francis G L Moir' and a memorial rose bed provided by the WI.

It is not only an iconic building but a great asset not only to the residents in Sanderstead but to those in Kenley and Riddlesdown who don't have a library. Young and old come from far and wide to use the facilities.

The library supports the very young with "Wiggle and Jiggle" and many of our elderly population use it for IT support and book clubs. Fortunately, it also has easy parking for families, the frail and disabled and in some cases it is the only social place in which many who are socially isolated can meet to read a newspaper, join a book club and catch up with friends. In addition, the experienced library staff are highly valued by local residents.

We are working very closely with our local councillors Yvette Hopley, Lynne Hale and Tim Pollard who are fully supportive of retaining the library provision. We are asking all members and readers of our website to take part in the consultation:

- Fill out the survey online - <https://getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk/project/678>
- Email: [librariesconsultation@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:librariesconsultation@croydon.gov.uk) or,
- Request a paper survey, call 020 7884 5159 or write to Croydon Central Library, Katharine Street, Croydon CR9 1ET.

**Sanderstead Residents' Association suggest that the following issues could and should be raised with Croydon Council in your response to the Survey:**

If this library building were to close, what impact do you think it will have on you?

- The Library occupies a central position in Sanderstead Ward
- It is served by a frequent [5/hour in each direction] 'bus service with stops right outside as well as being in walkable distance for much of the community.
- Selsdon Library as a 'reasonable' alternative ignores the additional journey time including a change of 'bus and will almost certainly result in increased car usage.
- Traffic congestion in the vicinity of Selsdon library is renowned and will only worsen.

If this library building were to close, what impact do you think it will have on the local community?

- The library has step free access for disabled and pushchairs. No assessment appears to have been made to ensure such groups are not disadvantaged.

- The library is of community value because it is the direct provider of a number of services, which have social, and community value closer to where residents live.
- There is no alternative facility for the Library Plan objectives proposed, for Sanderstead residents.
- Sanderstead Ward has a higher rate of people over the age of 65 (23.8%) than Croydon as a whole 13.8% so residents should not be further inconvenienced by its closure.
- Six local schools and four local nurseries make regular use of the library.
- Selsdon library a proposed a reasonable alternative but no investigation appears to have been made as to whether these organisations will be willing to travel further or not, nor how their journeys will be made.
- No equalities impact assessment appears to have been made to identify those more seriously affected by library closures.

Can you suggest a cost neutral alternative to the proposals, where the Sanderstead Library building would not require any council funding?

- Challenge the 'consultation' - it is presenting a fait accompli that the library has to be closed.
- The library has space for other than the current activities, is therefore capable, without extensive work to absorb Croydon Council's published Library Plan objectives.
- The building is surrounded by green space and the site as a whole is capable of being developed for some recreational use including children's activity and refreshments etc.
- Alternatives appear not to have been considered, merely a cost avoidance scheme by closure.
- The Library savings proposed are extremely modest in terms of the overall amount to be saved. Croydon actually spends less on its library service than comparable boroughs.
- The priority repairs estimate are not acceptable without a quantified breakdown of costs.

Do you have any other ideas we should consider?

- Sanderstead Library is the only publicly owned community facility in Sanderstead and could form a library/hub and be a centre for more services thereby reducing costs as set out by the council's own policy regarding hubs and the Library Plan.

Is there anything else you want us to consider as part of this consultation?

- The questions are 'loaded' and only available on-line.
- A proper consultation cannot be held during lockdown when libraries are closed and the users who don't have access to the internet have been excluded.
- This 'consultation' is presenting a fait accompli that the library has to close.
- The total number of visits to Croydon libraries in 2015/16 was 1,951,000 and by 2019/20 had fallen to 1,465,000 a decrease of approximately 25% over the whole of Croydon. For Sanderstead library, the visits were 35,230 in 2015/16 and 35,222 in 2019/20.
- During the period 2015/16 to 2019/20, Sanderstead is the only Croydon library with no decrease in usage whatsoever.

If you have other suggestions for savings elsewhere in the library service, please tell us more:

- Libraries are by their nature primarily providers of service.
- If this cannot be provided from the public purse, the use of the premises can and must be financed by other sympathetic activities such as community, activity and leisure.
- This approach has been ignored and the only action proposed is a burnt earth policy of closure.
- This proposal is totally unacceptable in a civilised society.