

The Library Group's Response to OCC's Proposal

Deddington Library is hanging by a thread - still. True, Oxfordshire County Council has found a little more money and instead of closing almost half the county's 43 libraries has offered a reprieve. But is it enough?

What OCC Proposes

Under the new scheme, none of the libraries would close, rather the staffing would be drastically curtailed. Libraries have been classified as 'Core': in the main towns and still fully staffed by professionals; 'Community plus': to operate with a two-thirds share of a librarian, or library managers as they are called; and 'Community': villages such as Deddington with one-third of a librarian. Library buildings, the provision of books, maintenance and the training of volunteers would remain the responsibility of the County Council.

On this basis, we guesstimate that Deddington library would need 20-40 highly-committed volunteers. Some might be *de facto* assistant library managers.

The 'Book a Future for Deddington Library' group has chewed over this revised scheme, listened to views expressed at a second public meeting and come to a grim conclusion. A library staffed for only a third of its opening hours by a paid librarian is simply not viable (a ploy here may be to shift the blame for closing the libraries from the council to the villages themselves).

In classifying the libraries, OCC used a standard local authority ranking system (originally devised by Hackney Council) to assess a rural scenario. In the case of Deddington - rated among the very lowest - the results seem perverse and in some cases downright wrong. For example, by their calculation there are zero shoppers for convenience goods within a half-mile of Deddington Library (have they not heard of the Co-op, Eagles and Foodies?). Nor does the survey recognise the great unlibrared stretch of villages to the south, some connected by the No. 59 bus, for which Deddington is a hub.

Alan Collins, chair of the group, has pointed out the failings in the survey to OCC, but even so it's unlikely Deddington's score will leap from 16 to the 59 points necessary for a 'Community plus' library.

What We Propose

The group will continue to campaign for full, or two-thirds staffing. However, we think there is one other possibility - a 50:50 split with Adderbury. There are advantages: the two libraries are near each other; the salaried librarian would spend less time on the road between libraries; and opening hours might dovetail. Some have argued that, on this basis, it should be quite possible to find the volunteers and it would even give the library a new lease of life, knitting it more closely to the community. Even with a half-time librarian, we would need a

revitalised Friends of Deddington Library to organise the 15-20 volunteers needed.

Still, to any offer short of a half-share of a librarian, the group is minded to say, thanks, but no thanks.

What You Can Do

Email us: We would like to know your views - email us at deddingtonpc@btconnect.com with 'library' in the subject box.

Go online: Above all we urge you to take part in OCC's consultation process [here](#) (then click on 'Have Your Say', p. 13). The key questions are Nos 3-6, and I hope you will find the above will help you answer them.

Post: If you are sending in a complete questionnaire, or just our edited version, it should be sent to Library Service Consultation, Freepost Oxfordshire County Council. If you do send the truncated version, please make clear which library you are interested in.

When: The deadline is 30 September 2011.