

Chineham Parish Council is completely opposed to the proposal to close the Chineham Library. The Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duty for all local authorities to provide “a comprehensive & efficient library service for all persons to make use thereof.” It is Chineham Parish Council’s opinion that Hampshire County Council (HCC) should continue to fulfil its statutory duty to the local residents of Chineham & the wider community by keeping Chineham Library open. The groundswell of public opinion following the consultation where Chineham Library was included in a list for possible closure should indicate to you that this library is very much loved and used. The Parish Council is aware that a “Friends of Chineham Library” group has been set up with approx. 1000 members, that local children have participated in putting together a display of “save our library” posters in the Chineham District Centre & that a local petition has been circulated. Many residents attended the consultation event on 4 February 2020 and spoke with HCC staff & went on to complete the consultation document.

It would therefore seem reasonable to take action to make the Library more sustainable before considering any decision to close it. The Parish Council would like to make some alternative suggestions with regards to funding for the Library service. Bradford Council has diverted funding from its “health & well-being” budget as they recognise the importance of books, the social interaction opportunities especially for those people who are isolated, the clubs/events & provision of information & access to the internet. The Arts Council reported in 2015 on the health & well-being benefits of public libraries. Would it be possible for HCC to do something similar i.e. follow the lead of Bradford Council? Sponsorship with local businesses could also be explored, in particular with Tellon Capital who are about to redevelop the Chineham District Centre & have stated their support for the Library. There are also opportunities for improving the income generation within the library itself (e.g. the community facilities in the Acorn Room) & the possibility of other agencies or indeed a Post Office using the building. The redevelopment of the Centre seems like a very good opportunity to explore these options. The Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants could also be explored as this is an open access programme for arts, museums & library projects.

The Parish Council has the following comments to make with regard to any potential closure:

- Chineham Library is the only Tier 2 library in the list. It has a large catchment area which will continue to grow with a number of proposed new local housing developments in the pipeline.
- The library has good accessibility as the building is on one level with adequate free parking on site & a good local bus service. It sits within a very busy shopping centre with high footfall.
- Research suggests that 44% of children whose local library is closed do not join an alternative library & early reading is a key criteria for HCC.
- The catchment area used in the data analysis for Chineham did not include those residents living in Popley & it has become apparent that a large number of residents can & do walk to the Chineham Library from Popley & that Marnel school children are encouraged to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge.
- Those residents who have used another County library are deemed to be able/willing to do so & so these residents have not been included in the unique user data. The number of users would be considerably higher if this “unique” criteria were not applied.
- The costs of running Chineham Library aren’t transparent.
- HCC has declared a climate emergency & so should be supporting local residents in being able to walk to their local library rather than using their cars to access the Basingstoke Discovery Centre.
- We are in favour of all libraries having shorter hours to avoid any closures.

The Parish Council is completely opposed to an independent community-managed library & has the following comments to make:

- There are concerns that local residents do not fully understand what is meant by the term “community” library & that analysis of their feedback to the consultation will be unhelpful.
- There are very real concerns about not being able to access the Library Service e.g. inter-library loans, School Reading Challenges, new loan stock etc.
- No access to qualified staff.
- Would the community be able to provide the volunteer capacity to run a community library & would those volunteers have the necessary entrepreneurial skills required to establish a successful independent library.

(Submitted to HCC 12/3/20).