

Deputation Statement

I am Mick Farrant and have lived in Gospel Oak for almost 50 years. I have been involved in community activities, including chair of QCCA, Carlton School, and Independent Custody Visitors. I am a community activist and have an MBE for my contributions.

The deputation relates to Queens Crescent Library. We are here because we believe the most important organisation in our area is this Library. We also came here because the Council has made two attempts in the past to close our Library, and we have lost three community centres, a TRA hall, two nurseries, a market, a GP practice, and two schools recently.

Currently, our Library is doing a great job. Examples include the children's library, which has many Muslim parents and their offspring, a knitters group, staff from the Council's Accessible Transport Department to help residents apply for Blue Badges and Freedom Passes. The manager organised an Id party during Ramadan last year and will do so again this year. Our Library needs to build on these to meet the needs of those residents who do not have access to the internet and need help in completing applications for services the Council provides. Help is also needed for some of our residents whose English is poor.

To build on the current excellent base, we would suggest the following:

- * Re-establishment of a Friends of QC Library group to act as an interface with the community. It was this group that prevented the closure of the Library previously. Central to the library strategy is the acknowledgement that every library is different and needs a "work plan" tailored to the needs of its users.
- * Increased security for staff. I have spoken to the police and staff about serious incidents in the Library and note that the security guard has been removed. This needs to be addressed immediately.
- * Related to this is the decision to allow anyone to use the Library toilet. The plan for the extensive regeneration of the market was to replace the existing toilets, but this has not occurred, the existing ones having been removed or destroyed.
- * There needs to be increased cooperation with other local organisations such as QCCA; the Friends Group is a mechanism for this.

I was pleased that the tone of the paper was so positive about the future possibilities our libraries offer.