



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Councillor Ray Morgon
London Borough of Havering
Town Hall
Main Road
Romford
RM1 3BD

24 January 2025

Dear Ray,

You will not be surprised to learn of my disappointment at yesterday's news that Harold Wood Library is to be among three that will be closing in just two months' time at the end of March. It was somewhat of a shock to learn of this news indirectly via the Council website and local media given how frequently I have engaged with the Council in recent weeks in relation to the Local Government Funding Settlement and the Council's budget.

Within the Council's statement, you advise that there is hope of the Harold Wood library 'reopening in a new building as part of future regeneration opportunities.' You will recall that this was among the suggestions I made to you when the library closures was first consulted upon however, in your July reply, you advised that the Council had made no assessment of this proposal across the sites considered for closure. It is somewhat surprising that plans for this are sufficiently developed as to warrant public statement, I hope that this is not false hope for the community. I would be grateful if you would be able to set out further the scope of those regeneration opportunities and expected timescales for their completion.

The Council report that the closure of Harold Wood, Gidea Park and South Hornchurch libraries will save the Council £288,000 annually. I maintain my view that this saving is insignificant in comparison to the huge loss of community assets and services that their closure would deliver, in our previous discussions you have claimed that these savings could be compared to a single high-needs social care case.

In this vein, and mindful of the prospect of the Harold Wood library's continued operation at a redeveloped site, I would be grateful if you would be able to confirm what proportion of the £288,000 expected saving is forecast to be realised via the closure of Harold Wood library. Given that you have stated that no staff are expected to be made redundant via the closures, if redevelopment plans can be accelerated – something I would be glad to assist with, it would seem needlessly disruptive to close the library at this juncture.

I am acutely aware of the challenges the Council faces in relation to its funding position and I will continue to work closely with you to find solutions; presenting your case to Ministers, securing opportunities for the Council to lobby them directly and I would be glad to assist in interactions with external funders/development partners. However, I cannot support these proposals and consider the closure of Harold Wood library to be short-sighted.

With best wishes,

Julia

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