



# COGGESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

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13 February 2019

Cllr Susan Barker  
Essex County Council  
County Hall  
Market Road  
Chelmsford  
CM1 1QH

Dear Cllr Barker

## **RE: Public consultation on Essex Future Library Services**

Coggeshall Parish Council would like to register their objections to the proposed changes to the staffing of the library in Coggeshall.

Firstly, the use of book lending data to formulate decision on the future of libraries is flawed. Clearly the lending of books will be declining with the furtherance of technology and the use of the internet and tablets. However, libraries have over the years have changed to provide invaluable services to the community in addition to just book lending. It is understood that many libraries measure footfall and these figures have not be released. Even these figures may not be accurate as they are measured on the number of times the door is opened and this will not include two people who enter at the same time – e.g. parent and child.

The local library in Coggeshall provides baby and toddler rhyme time, knit and natter sessions, family history research, printing and photocopying and baby weighing services. It also provides a reading area where locals can read the local papers. None of the above will have been taken into consideration in the report produced by Essex County Council which focuses on only data. Additionally, the library provides other services such as the distribution of plastic recycling sacks which means residents would have to travel to Braintree for this or Braintree District Council would have to make deliveries.

The Coggeshall library also works in close partnership with the local pre-schools and schools. There is a rolling programme of class visits for the local state primary school and the Soaring High. The library staff visit the schools and they also visit the library.

Currently Coggeshall library is currently staffed by trained professionals and it is proposed that these should be replaced with volunteers. Coggeshall currently has a number of initiatives and projects which rely on volunteers. One of these is the community bus which operates daily between Coggeshall and Kelvedon and the group struggle to find volunteer drivers for this service. Volunteers would also require training and to be DBS checked. It is likely that a large number of volunteers would be required to service the library and this will incur additional costs in training and vetting.

It should also be taken into consideration that it is planned for Coggeshall to have an additional 350 new homes in the next five years. These are properties which already have

detailed or outline planning permission. This equates to a potential population increase of nearly 900 people – nearly 20% of the total population of Coggeshall parish. Should ECC decide to close some of the libraries in adjacent parishes, then it should also be factored in that some of these residents would then travel to Coggeshall to use the library.

The library is also used for a number of community uses which are listed below. None of these uses will figure on the booking lending data and alternatives will need to be found should the library close.

It should also be noted that the library hours were reduced some years ago. Previously it was open until 7.00 pm on Tuesdays and Fridays which afforded access to those that worked. The removal of this option means that for this group of residents the only available access is Saturday morning. This will have had an effect on the footfall and the lending rates.

#### Current other uses of the Coggeshall Library

Baby Weighing  
Knit and natter monthly meetings  
Code Club  
Community tea  
Cheeky Monkeys Rhymes Story & Craft  
Collection point for refuse sacks  
Centre for dissemination of information on public consultations such as Neighbourhood Plan  
Author events  
Local newspapers  
Tourist information  
Out of term time events for school children  
Quiet study area  
Free Wi-Fi and access to PCs/Internet  
Family History research

Finally, we note from the Podcast, that you are suggesting that Parish Clerks and Parish Councils should be involved in Community Libraries. We would be grateful to receive the interpretation from ECC Legal Department in relation to Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 which prohibits a Local Authority from discharging their functions to another Local Authority.

Yours sincerely



Debbie Morgan  
Parish Clerk  
For and on behalf of Coggeshall Parish Council