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Head Teacher

Dear Head Teacher

### **LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING – PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON LIBRARIES**

As you will know Havering Council launched a public consultation on the future of the library estate late afternoon Friday 10 May 2024.

This consultation proposes to reduce the estate from 10 libraries with 5 earmarked for closure due to the financial challenges the borough faces. The proposal is seeking the views of residents and it lists the following libraries up for closure – Elm Park, Collier Row, South Hornchurch, Gidea Park and Harold Wood.

I am sure you and your school will have extreme concerns the impact of such if it goes through and we at Havering UNISON and across the collective unions, believe that all 10 libraries within the borough play a vital role within the local community and should be valued and maintained.

Libraries are an essential hub for learning, research and community engagement, they play a pivotal role in the opportunities for children as early as the development from baby bounce to summer reading challenge along with a raft of literacy to support literacy skills and revision in preparation for exams as children grow into young adults.

Not only this but they provide a safe space for many residents seeking employment who live in the borough along with the expertise of staff who have years of professional experience in the library sector.

These services are a statutory obligation to the local authority and removing up to 5 will be an absolute travesty along with stripping future generations of the have a space to learn, grow and develop. Many of us will be able to share stories of how a library played an important part of our childhood and we do not want to see them disappear.

The consultation does make it evident that the larger libraries will be accessible within 20/30 minutes by public transport this is not always easy for the poorest and most vulnerable in the community.

Keeping them open and alive they also provide warm safe spaces for all members of our community and enable various groups to meet. They play a valuable part in helping alleviate loneliness and social isolation.

This will also have an impact on staff who are likely to be at risk of redundancy if up to 5 libraries close. Many of our colleagues in the library sector are working mums who live in the borough and this will also be a hugely disappointing to lose them.

The consultation is not a long term fix, we are not hiding from holding the government to account for the disproportionate funding position we are in. Libraries are the lifeline for many residents and children across the borough and we must fight to keep them open and alive. If they close the libraries they will be sold off as assets and developed on – this is not regeneration this is creating a concrete jungle which will not have any community accessibility to the vital services that libraries offer and bring to all.

Havering UNISON and the collective unions are asking if your school would join and support our campaign by signing the petition, completing the consultation survey and be part of a movement to fight against the proposals.

We are also informed that all schools will receive communication from the local authority regarding a child centred consultation specifically for children which we would encourage all schools to share with pupils however at present we do not have any further details on this.

We would like to send some leaflets which we encourage you to share with your pupils, if you would like some please contact me directly.

I thank you very much for taking the time to consider our position.

Yours sincerely



Gabby Lawler  
Branch Secretary  
Havering UNISON

