

# Redditch Library Consultation

Consultation with Local History Group and Archives Team

Tuesday 24 January 2023

Redditch Library Meeting Room 2

## Attendees

Local History Group

Archives Group

WCC Attendees:

Hannah Perrott – Assistant Director for Communities

Plus WCC Officers including County and Diocesan Archivist

## Meeting Comments and Responses

**Comment:** When is the about the library going to be made? Will the decision be made after local elections?

**Response:** WCC Officer - No decision will be made until the consultation has ended

**Supplementary Comment:** Storage space is about half the size of what there is currently, but the material within the current storage space is not just archives and local history collection. We will be focusing on reducing the storage of things like chairs and extra books first, and prioritising local Redditch information to be moved to the Town Hall (pending decision) if the storage conditions are appropriate.

**Comment:** Will you know exactly what is downstairs before the decision is made? Wouldn't you need that information to make the decision on whether you will be reducing the service?

**Response:** WCC Officer - The process is ongoing at the moment, looking at what will be retained, what will be sent to the Hive etc. This was happening anyway. Need to get an idea of what is included in the basement and where that should go? How can we keep it accessible?

**Comment:** As part of recommendations to Cabinet, the storage space is a smaller sizer, what will be known before hand and feed into Cabinet report?

**Response:** WCC Officer - We are undertaking a review at the moment.

**Comment:** What has happened to archives in other towns e.g. Bromsgrove

**Response:** WCC Officer - County archives held by County archivists in the Hive. Lots of Redditch District Council archives at the Hive, stored in central location since 1947, plus additional other sources e.g. Churches. Lots of things about Redditch are already in the Hive. There is material here that is about Redditch which is not in the Hive, and maybe should be in the Hive in an archive environment. Most of the stuff here is from other organisations of the Town. There is no such thing as town archives generally.

**Comment:** Local history items in the basement could be brought out on to the library floor. There is very little of other primary archive material sitting across the library service, possible small collections in other towns, so Redditch is a bit of an anomaly

**Comment:** Thanks for opportunity to respond and discuss – there has been lots of stuff in press about the archives and we haven't had a chance to speak. There seems to be a misconception in the press that the people looking after the archives are not looking after them. In the current location, there is no evidence of decay, mould etc. – why then is the current location being stated as not suitable? Is the current room temperature and humidity controlled? It is working now, or if it isn't it certainly has been for years. Collections in the Archives are good. We have been using Modes which is an archive manual and is used across libraries and we've set up a very similar system. Done paintings and next is the photos. We can do more with this resource if we have an archive.

**Response:** WCC Officer - need to decide what we do store in Redditch or what needs to go to the Hive. Can we agree where some information goes? (Agreement from the audience). Then how can this be accessible to people. How can we find the balance of sharing the information.

**Comment:** Agree with a lot of what been said. Concerned about access to this information if it goes elsewhere. Concerns moving to the Hive (thought there wasn't enough room at the Hive currently). Feel that the building should stay – no advantage in knocking it down and moving the library. You clarified there is no issue about space at the Hive. Just think the stuff in Redditch should stay in Redditch.

**Comment:** How do people access them from the Hive? It is pointless having this collection if people can't access it.

**Response:** WCC Officer – need to work together on this. Which history pieces have more value than others? Very open to discussion as there is some stuff that shouldn't be downstairs. Working together to decide what should go and what should stay.

**Supplementary Comment:** Concerned when talking about moving things from Redditch to Worcester because of access, 20 miles away, public transport is an issue. What is down there should stay in Redditch. Is there enough room at the Hive anyway?

**Comment:** How quickly will Redditch archives go to the hive and be accessible on the catalogue? Concerned over the accessibility of the archives. Will be more agile if it was local and catalogued. Difference between keeping things safe and making it accessible. Slight difference between what we might think and a community might think about what to keep and what not to keep i.e. archives vs artefact.

**Comment:** Building should stay, archive should stay, see no advantage.

**Comment:** When the available space is full, will there be no more room for anything else?

**Response:** WCC Officer - There is a 15 year expansion programme at the Hive, there is space and when it is all filled, the next strategy will come in.

**Comment:** Footfall of people coming into the library to see the archives is improving and we are wanting to build on that and there is custom for it. It's easy where the library is now to access the archives. Town Hall to library is on an incline and it's a local authority building. The library is a helpful building / happy building and the town hall is seen differently and don't want to go in that building.

**Comment:** Not all people (older people) have a computer, difficulties in accessing the internet. If the way to access local history information is online, this will cause issues. It is mostly older people who want to access the records. It is better for them to be able to go to a place and see things

**Comment:** Shouldn't be knocking down history and destroying it, do we want to destroy part of 20<sup>th</sup> century history, in destroying the library building? This building was purpose built as a library, designed to be purely a library, and probably one of the best late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the Town

**Comment:** Regarding the move, there are a lot of windows and glass which isn't good for books – has this been looked into? Sunlight is not good for books – too many windows in the new design, not a purpose built building

**Comment:** Regarding the archive elements that have been bequeathed to town and council. People are getting concerned about what has been donated to the library which they may want to take back? Hypothetically if those donated archives had to move outside the town where do our responsibilities lie? Are these people able to say they want it back?

**Supplementary Comment:** Would need to see the deed of handing it over. Would need to consult with depositors if they loaned it)

**Comment:** Misinformation about the building in the press and on social media stating it is too expensive to run, falling apart, no longer sustainable if DWP move out – RBC saying it is not fit for

purpose and you have to move out anyway. Has the scaffolding outside been up to help to spread this message?

**WCC Officer Comment:** Primary goal is if the decision is made to move the library, that we ensure the best possible service is delivered and the best possible archive storage and access to.

**Comment:** Can we call the archive section the Philip Davies archive, he gave his life to the archives of the town?

**Response:** WCC Officer - This will be considered.