

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF CITIZENS' ADVISORY PANEL
THURSDAY 8th OCTOBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillor N Brown (Chair), Councillors A Ambrose and A Hack, and local residents Mrs N Blight, Mr J Jameson, and Mrs S Zastawky, Mrs B Hazelgrove, Mr J Hazelgrove, Mrs L Spick and Councillor Betts (substituting Councillor R Waterton).

Officers in attendance: Mr D Tilley, Executive Officer & Town Clerk, Mrs Anita Barrand, Community Engagement & Events Coordinator and Roo Peake, Local Area Coordinator.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received Councillor R Waterton and from town residents Mr J Johnson and Mr T Smith.

2. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held 17th September 2015

The report of the meeting held on 17th September 2015 was received and noted.

4. Future Options for the Library and Customer Service Shop

The Advisory Panel considered Leicestershire County Council's proposals to consult on replacing Braunstone Town Library with the mobile library service and received an update on the Town Council's position and response (item 4 on the agenda).

The Executive Officer and Town Clerk confirmed that there was a continued dialogue between the Town Council and the County Council concerning the matter and that arrangements were being put in place to discuss with Blaby District Council the terms of the Service Level Agreement to deliver Council Customer Services and Social Inclusion services from the proposed combined Community Hub.

Town Resident, Mr J Hazelgrove, read out the following statement to the Panel:

"The County Council statement which contained the threat to close the Braunstone Town Library and replace it with a Mobile Library is plain daft and should be challenged, both directly and through the media. Whoever prompted this ridiculous idea has no understanding of Mobile Library operation and has probably never been inside one or used one.

I have done some fact finding and was helped this week by a friend, now retired, who was a Mobile Library Driver/Librarian in Leicestershire for over 40 years.

Some Main Points:

- 1. Mobile Libraries were designed from the outset for the purpose of providing a book lending service to rural communities with populations of less than 2,000.*
- 2. In order to comply with size and weight restrictions applying to use of roads and residential areas, the standard mobile is based on a maximum 5 tons or less chassis. This in turn governs the design and size of the body and the average total stock of books is limited to around 2,500. This number has to cover the reading needs of adults and children and is in no sense comparable with the size of the book stock in Braunstone Town Library.*
- 3. The impact on children's reading could be disastrous. In our present library, peak borrowing in term time is between 3.45pm and 5pm. If mobile library schedules were earlier, children would be denied access to the already limited stock of children's books on the mobile.*
- 4. Space within a mobile library is tight. If I stood in the centre aisle with arms outstretched I would damage my knuckles and my mobile library friend gave the maximum number of readers that could use the mobile at any one time as seven to eight. With population the size of Braunstone Town it would need a Kingsway Surgery style advance booking system to sort that one out.*
- 5. A mobile library has to operate to a published regular timed schedule of stops so that people can assemble to exchange their books. That might work in a rural area but there would be major problems with time keeping in Braunstone Town which, as we know only too well, is at times strangled with traffic congestion.*
- 6. Leicestershire County Council currently has a fleet of 5 mobile libraries, based in different parts of the County. These were never designed or intended for use in densely populated urban areas and are completely unsuited to that role.*
- 7. To put this into context – many authorities have attempted in the past to introduce the mobile library concept into urban areas and imaginative experiments using articulated units and trailer libraries were all eventually abandoned because of insoluble operational reasons. The truth dawned that the larger the mobile library, the less mobile it became because of associated traffic and parking problems.*
- 8. To the best of my knowledge they have no computer or IT provision.*

The Officers who advise Cabinet at County Hall have not done their homework and should talk to the very people employed in running the mobile library service. The mobile library service is very popular and highly valued by the rural community but is wholly inadequate to meet the needs of an urban population of our size.

What they are proposing is about as logical as suggesting to our local Co-op shop that they should close down and start selling goods to customers from a large van!"

In addition, the following issues were raised by members of the Panel:

- i. to implement their proposals for a mobile library service, Leicestershire County Council would need more vans and staff;
- ii. Leicestershire County Council's Corporate Assets Management Plan makes provision for 3 extra rooms at Coalville Library, 2 extra rooms at Hinckley Library and in partnership with the District, for a joint Library and Museum at Market Harborough Library; therefore, why were the County Council against a partnership arrangement with Braunstone Town Council for Braunstone Town Library;

- iii. the best way forward would be to develop a sustainable mixed market approach offering choice and providing for a diverse community, alongside school libraries;
- iv. it was wrong for the County Council to claim the proposals for a Joint Community Hub was not viable, all other partners were supportive;
- v. Braunstone Town Library served the eighth largest population in Leicestershire County and given the legal agreement, it should be supported;
- vi. the mobile library was at Thorpe Astley for 45 minutes, this was not sufficient time for all the users of Braunstone Town Library;
- vii. the mobile library does not cater for wheelchairs – a full impact assessment need to be carried out;
- viii. Leicestershire County Council was required to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, it was questionable whether serving Braunstone Town with a mobile library was efficient; and
- ix. it was disappointing and inappropriate that Leicestershire County Council had issued a press release on the proposals prior to Cabinet consideration and approval.

Members of the Advisory Panel discussed the feeling of residents and the need to form a resident's action group to oppose the proposals to replace the Town Library with a mobile library service.

AGREED that the statement by Mr J Hazelgrove be included in the minutes and on the Town Council's website.

5. Termination of the Meeting

AGREED that the following items be included on the agenda for the next Panel meeting, scheduled for 3rd December 2015:

- i. update on the future of Braunstone Town Library; and
- ii. views of members of the community, which were included in Braunstone Life to brighten up the Town with plants/flowers, planters and new welcome signs.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

NOTE:

CRIME & DISORDER ACT 1998 (SECTION 17) – The Council has an obligation to consider Crime and Disorder implications of all its activities and to do all that it can to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area.

EQUALITIES ACT 2010

Braunstone Town Council has a duty in carrying out its functions to have due regard to:-

- *eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;*
- *advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and;*
- *foster good relations between different groups*

To ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the basis of race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity.

SIGNED _____ (CHAIR)

DATED _____