

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 July 2020

Statement and Questions from Brig Oubridge about Salisbury Library

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation

**To Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling Cabinet Member for ICT, Digitalisation,
Operational Assets, Leisure and Libraries**

Statement

Given that construction has been paused on the proposed new temporary library building and hotel in Fisherton Street, Salisbury, and that the library part of this scheme is now in doubt due to a lack of funds on the part of Wiltshire Council, the hotel part similarly in doubt due to the present difficulties of the hospitality sector overall, and the developers now advertising for new prospective tenants;

and given that this scheme is extremely unpopular in Salisbury, and led to a petition to the council last year of over 5000 signatures by local residents opposing this scheme, collected in an unprecedented coordinated fashion by the local Labour, Green and Lib. Dem. parties;

and given that the unpopular relocation of the library was envisaged as a temporary measure, pending the subsequent building of a new library in Salisbury for which neither plans nor funding currently exist;

Question

will Wiltshire Council now take advantage of the opportunity created by this hiatus to reconsider this entire scheme?

Response

With regard to the site of the former BHF building on Fisherton Street, the council had been negotiating with the developer of this site on a deal that would have delivered a new library in the ground floor of the developer's scheme. However, as a result of the economic situation and the significant uncertainties that this creates, the transaction on the terms agreed cannot proceed at this moment and the developer has made the decision to pause its work on its site. This is a decision for the developer on its land and not one within the council's control.

The funding to deliver the new library was due to come in part from a Local Growth Fund grant the council had secured from government with the support of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Officers are now working closely with the LEP to reassign the funding it has secured to support essential infrastructure provision within the Maltings, including flood attenuation works, that will enable the delivery of the council's wider regeneration goals for this site and protect future development in the city centre.

The delivery of the wider scheme may need to wait until market conditions stabilise and at the appropriate time we will consider options for Salisbury Library. In the meantime the Library will remain in its current location..