

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

17 January 2012 (morning meeting)

Public Participation

Statement and Questions from Ms Stella Hall

**Proposed Creation of Central Devizes Customer Access Point and the Closure of
Browfort, Urchfont Manor and Bradley Road Buildings**

Statement

I have read about the closure of Urchfont Manor and am truly disappointed and saddened. It has been a wonderful venue for a huge variety of subjects and people. As far as I know Wiltshire doesn't provide anything similar in the county.

I, like many others have benefitted from the resource. Indeed my partner is attending a weekend course starting tomorrow evening.

It is understandable that all areas of expenditure are coming under close scrutiny and I can only assume Urchfont is closing for financial reasons - possibly short term ones so that monies can be generated for other projects.

It is a great pity that wider public consultation was not considered earlier and more than likely it is now too late but please can you reconsider. After all, there are real working examples of successful centres similar to Urchfont - West Dean, Great Missenden etc - so clearly it is feasible to provide such centres for learning. And if it's not Urchfont what are the plans for an alternative.

I look forward to hearing from you following the Cabinet meeting.

Questions

- why has decision not been made clear to the public before now?
- what is the consultation period?
- why have we only until noon today to submit questions, when for most of us, the first time we knew about the closure was on opening yesterdays (thursday's) Gazette. It seems like a very undemocratic process to only allow until noon the next day to make protestations and representations?
- what alternatives are being considered for Urchfont type courses?
- what, in detail, are the reasons for closing Urchfont - financial is a very broad statement?