

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 79(b)

Subject: Public Questions

Date of meeting: 11 December 2025

A period of not more than thirty minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by a member of the public.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public:

(1) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Jess Jetmore

We know the savings from closing our library has been estimated at £20,000. Given the school it is attached to doesn't need the additional space, there is no realistic future for this building. If Westdene closes, what is the plan if the building sits empty and incurs security, maintenance, and deterioration costs that wipe out the claimed saving?

(2) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Isobel Foxon

Part of your consultation mentions that the southern part of our ward go to Hove library instead of Westdene. This is of course true, the southern part of our ward being Hove Park. Because our Ward is so big, you've disproportionately allocated low footfall and low responses in the consultation to a large ward. Westdene is a small community with a one-room library, and the response it has generated is huge relative to the area it serves and the library's size.

Moreover, Westdene pupils access the library daily through the internal school door, including during unstaffed hours. We don't believe this footfall was counted. Why has flawed and incomplete data continued to be used as the basis for recommending closure?

(3) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Ruth Williams

Clause 3.50 records that the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee formally recommended that Cabinet 'do not proceed with the libraries closure plan at this time'; why is Cabinet choosing to advance the closure of Westdene Library despite this scrutiny warning?

(4) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Esther Sweeney

Given that the Equality Impact Assessment identifies elderly residents, disabled residents, and SEN children as disproportionately affected by the closure of Westdene Library, how can councillors lawfully proceed with a permanent closure without first demonstrating that all reasonable alternatives have been fully explored and transparently costed in a way that satisfies the Public Sector Equality Duty?

(5) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Roni Graham

The report relies heavily on not only the use of alternative libraries, which are genuinely challenging for primary age, elderly and disabled in our community to access (and a double bus option with a major A road between is not an acceptable alternative for these vulnerable groups) but also strong reliance is placed on the Home Delivery Service. The service is only staffed and operated by volunteers and, as such, is irregular (only running when suitably mobile volunteers are available) and unreliable. As the library service has also placed a ban on recruiting new volunteers, how will councillors ensure that this service is up to the job that you claim it needs to be in order to provide a genuinely workable acceptable alternative for those that need it most if Westdene Library closes?

(6) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Alicia Buckingham

Councillors are being asked to vote on permanently closing Westdene Library when some of the most important information still hasn't been published. We still haven't seen the financial figures for what Jubilee Library will actually cost once the PFI ends, we haven't seen our feedback properly incorporated into your consultation papers, and we haven't seen the assessment of the city-wide alternative that could save money without closures. Without those pieces of evidence, what is this decision actually being based on?

(7) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Louisa Taylor

The footfall data on which the review of Westdene Library's use was based appears to have been from a period prior to the announcement of proposed closure and consultation. The footfall and use since that announcement has increased significantly. Residents often move in/out of Westdene and many were not aware of the library's existence (if you enter the school only from the bottom field or do not pass through the one-way system on Bankside you would not see that it exists because it is very small). The proposal to close the library has highlighted its existence to local residents and the need/use mix has since increased. Why has there been no attempt to look at the current data, in the light of the recommendation by the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee not to go ahead with the proposals to close the library?

(8) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Marisa Brown

Like Rottingdean, Westdene residents cannot resource a library in the timescale proposed and have a much higher number of elderly residents and disabled residents than other parts of the city. Additionally, Westdene has no public transport route to the proposed alternative library and long walk over two miles with hills and crossing the busy A23. Given the similarities, why is Rottingdean library recommended to be retained but Westdene to close?

(9) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Tara Coffey

I understand the closure of Westdene will save you 20k, what is the breakdown of this figure as the books and building are already paid for, as is the salaried member of staff?

(10) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Kate Reid

You've described these closures as the 'first phase', with additional community-library closures already being planned or modelled for the next phase. Why has the public not been told that this is the beginning of a wider programme?

(11) Sustainability plan for Libraries– Julie Lawrence

We welcome the fact that the proposal to close Rottingdean library has now been removed from the proposals for Cabinet. This responds to the serious concerns raised by residents about losing Rottingdean library that acts a crucial community hub and welcomes nearly 30,000 visits annually, fosters literacy among local school children—especially those without access to books at home, as well as providing older residents with vital educational information, support, and opportunities for social interaction. Will the Cabinet now remove any uncertainty by providing an assurance that if your officers find that “alternative community-based provision” is not possible, Rottingdean Library will remain as part of the library network and that all possible alternatives will be fully explored and presented to Cabinet before any libraries are considered for closure in the future?

