



LOCAL ELECTIONS - SPEAK UP FOR LIBRARIES!

The Speak Up for Libraries alliance* is urging people everywhere to make public libraries a central issue in local elections.

This is a once-in-four-years chance to make sure local councils understand that libraries are a low-cost, essential resource for their work - and deeply valued by local residents.

Already, many library services are threatened by deep cuts, widespread closures of vital local branches - or the damaging policy of turning branches over to be run by volunteers

Yet the unprecedented cuts to government grant that local authorities are facing mean that libraries, despite being a statutory service that councils must provide, are once more in danger of being seen as soft targets for savings. Such cuts often save little but do great damage.

If people wait another four years, their own library could go. Nationally a postcode lottery will become a reality with only some communities benefiting from the presence of a professionally run library.

Libraries remain the lynchpin of communities, offering access to learning, reading, information and enjoyment.

Libraries are a trusted public space, a place for everyone.

They play a crucial role in improving literacy standards and in combating the digital divide.

Speak up for Libraries believes that libraries, far from being obsolete, are more important than ever. That is why we are asking local politicians, and the government, to make a public commitment to their survival and development.

Speak up for Libraries is asking local councillors to sign up to the following manifesto when standing for election;

- Acknowledge that libraries are important to people – especially when times are hard for individuals and communities
- Give a commitment to engage with communities to design services that meet their needs and aspirations.
- Ensure library services are properly resourced and staffed. A commitment to a service that is publicly funded, managed and run by paid professional staff.
- Recognise that properly funded library services contribute to the health and well-being of communities and so complement the work of other public services.

And lobby the Government to:

- Give libraries a long-term future, with a vision for their future development and clear standards of service
- Enforce the commitment in law to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. This commitment should also include digital, ICT and e-book services.

Notes:

- Speak Up For Libraries is an alliance of individual campaigners and national organisations: Elizabeth Ash, Campaign for the Book, CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals), The Library Campaign, Unison, Voices for the Library.
- Local Elections - This year there will be Council elections on 22 May for the London Boroughs (32), all Metropolitan Boroughs (36) and a number of unitary authorities (20). There are no local elections in Scotland or Wales or for County Councils in England. The local elections in District Councils are not relevant as they are not responsible for public library services
- Library closures:
 - Public Library Statistics produced by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) show that there was a net loss of 212 libraries or mobile libraries in the UK in 2011/12 and 71 libraries (including mobile libraries) in 2012/13.
 - Public Library News estimate that in 2013/14 493 libraries (including mobile libraries) in the UK were closed, or planned to be closed, or became community managed libraries managed by volunteers.
 - Since April 2014, Public Library News report that 78 libraries (including mobile libraries) are threatened with closure and 5 libraries to become community managed libraries run by volunteers <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/>
- Local government funding and expenditure:
 - There was a 33% real term cut to government funding of local government in England between 2011-2015 (Comprehensive Spending Review 2011-2015)
 - A further 10% cut to Government's Core Funding of local government in England planned in 2015/2016 (Spending Review 2016-2016)
 - Additional funding cuts are widely expected in 2016-2018

In a press release issued by the Local Government Association on announcement of the 2015/2016 Spending review, Sir Merrick Cockell, Local Government Association Chairman is quoted as saying;

“...the fact remains that some councils will simply not have enough money to meet all their statutory responsibilities. Services such as culture and leisure facilities, school support, road maintenance and growth-related programmes will bear the brunt of these cuts”

http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/4044082/NEWS

Website www.speakupforlibraries.org

Twitter @SpeakUp4Libs

Facebook www.facebook.com/SpeakUpForLibraries