

CWOP/28/10

Policy & Scrutiny Committee Community Wellbeing and Older People

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CQC Inspection Feedback

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Team

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To receive and consider a report from Martin Palmer, Principal Strategic Officer, on the library premises at Goldlay Gardens.

Visit to Goldenlay Gardens 05.03.09

I visited the premises with Cllr Jill Reeves and we were shown around the premises by Martin Palmer.

The premises can be labelled an industrial complex in the midst of a residential area. It is situated in the heart of residential Chelmsford accessed via the Odeon round about.

The premises seem to have three stages, an old print work with the usual glass roofs which are not really weather proof.

In the 1950's it was HQ of the public library. The 60's brought forward the usual flat roof building. The activities on the first floor are the management team, a training suite and some members of staff from Adult Social Care.

The ground floor area could be described as a book receipt and delivery area, the logistics hub.

Martin informed me that there have been moves afoot for years to move the whole process to a more suitable site but asset management is reported as the holding factor in the past.

There is an area devoted to the 7 white transit vans which move books around the county on demand with this site as the main hub. There is a need to look at this as a logistic exercise.

There is also considerable storage area devoted to old books which are stated to be difficult to replace but not rare. It was said they would be expensive to replace. I also found storage of House of Commons debates dating back to 1941. My questions are the area they are stored in is not secure from water or fire. The question is, do we need these items and if so is this the correct place?

We were shown an area devoted to the performing arts. This consists of a multiplicity of copies of musical scores and scripts for plays. I am informed these are rented to various groups at a suitable rate. Statistics show that the demand for these has increased. The rate of return on an investment could be questioned. Should we be in the business?

The ground floor work area is associated with books in general. The cataloguing, ordering etc are all housed in the newer part of the building. This area, whilst computerised still retains a great amount of paper and could in general be classed as a paper based system. In my opinion there is retention of paper to back up computers. Either we have a computerised system or a paper system not both. If the system is unreliable then processes should be put in place to rectify this. It was stated that they had been waiting 18 months for a new system, why?

Personally I found the whole system too labour intensified from that which I would expect in a modern day distribution process.

This is not a criticism of what exists. The service performs the task allocated to it within the limitations of the premises and resources. My function is to look at the system as a critical friend and the criticism raised must be considered as opportunities to modernise for the future.

Recommendations:-

- (a) We need to justify space in an insecure environment from water and fire for old and difficult to replace, but not rare, books and papers. How well used is the facility?
- (b) We need to justify the retention of House of Commons debates which may be sourced elsewhere. How well are they used?
- (c) The facility provided for the Performing Arts should be challenged to justify the service being provided by the library service.
- (d) We should consider a greater use of computer and automated (of the shelf) systems to streamline the facility that is provided to the libraries.
- (e) If this facility in it's entirety or part, is proved to be financially viable then a business case should be made to relocated whatever remains to a more appropriate site at or adjacent to a highway network suitable for a logistics business.
- (f) A challenge should take place to ascertain if a partner organisation could provide part or the whole service.

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