

Michael Hill OBE – Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Member for Tenterden



Mrs D Blackwell
Planning Officer
Southborough Society

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Ask For: Mr Michael Hill
Date: 5th February 2019

Dear Mrs Blackwell

Thank you for your letter of 23rd January 2019 regarding Southborough library and it being part of the community hub scheme.

I appreciate the views of the committee of the Southborough Society but need to be clear that Kent County Council are fully committed to the hub project and the library being at the heart of this new building for Southborough. The strategy of the library service going forward is very much in line with the hub project, this is about bringing services and people in the community together in one building. We see this as a great opportunity for the library service to reach new people and audiences from people using the hub building or the adjoining doctor's surgery. We do also have to reflect on the financial climate that all local authorities are in and the demands of maintaining hundreds of buildings across the County. Partnership approaches like the Southborough hub project enable all partners to make efficient use of one building.

The detailed internal design of the library at the hub has not yet started but what we can say is that it will contain all the elements of the service as they are now. A vibrant colourful children's library will be there along with computers to use and all the areas of book stock you would expect. This is also not the first library that is part of a community centre similar to this and we know that this approach can work very successfully, examples include the Eden Centre, Edenbridge and the Swanley Link, Swanley. We would be happy to facilitate a tour of these libraries if this would be helpful to illustrate how these work. When the designs of the library in the new hub are developed, we are also committed to engaging with local people about the design and how it looks.

As to the potential for other services in the hub as you describe and what happens to the old library site and the green space these are not something for us to comment on directly. The project is working to include display cases for the library area, possibly on the ends of the bookshelves that will enable the display of Southborough artefacts and Memorabilia and look to continue discussions on this as a way to promote this material to a wider audience. I have passed the matter of what space and partners are in the building onto the project team for the Southborough Hub to take into consideration. In terms of what happens to the old library site this is something that I have referred to the KCC infrastructure team.

I appreciate the Town forum and Southborough's support for the library service and the value people get from the current Southborough library. I can assure you we considered carefully the options before committing to the hub project which we feel is the best option to build on this success for the future of Southborough library.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Michael Hill OBE
Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
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