

Below is an email sent from Borough Councillor Patricia Moore to Councillor Susan Barker, Essex County Council on 28th November 2018

Subject: Mersea library

Dear Cllr Barker,

Further to my visit to County Hall last week, I would like to equip you with more information regarding special factors that ought to have been taken into account with regard to the rating of West Mersea library. If these factors are taken into account I believe they would justify a re-rating in Mersea's favour.

1. Social Isolation:-

in Mersea and Pyfleet ward the number of people over 65 is 33% of the total of 10,000, significantly higher than Colchester as a whole. This should give us 2 extra points alone. Many of the elderly rely on mobility scooters that prevent the use of public transport. We have blind folk who rely on talking books from the library. There are parts of the island that have no internet access, the library provides the only means to access the now paperless local government.

2. Deprivation:-

10% of our older population are affected by income deprivation according to 2015 IMD

3. Community Facilities:-

the local population is low on community facilities, the only ones on record are the school and post office.

4. Population:-

In mid 2017 the population was 10,028 with another 200 homes planned for in the Local Plan. There are in excess of 2,000 caravans and lodges on the island that do not feature in the population statistics but are in fact occupied on a semi - permanent basis. This puts the population up by another 5,000.

5. Location:-

Mersea is an island frequently cut off by the tide and /or traffic for several hours. It is 9.2 miles from central Colchester. There is no lateral communication due to the geography of rivers and estuaries so in the absence of Mersea library there would be no provision in the whole of the Winstree Hundred. The bus takes 45 mins to get to Colchester and costs £5 for a single ticket, a car journey would cost a minimum of £6 including parking.

6. Usage:-

As well as the books, CDs and talking books collected in person, there are the home delivery books, I do not know the figures for these but with the age demographics it will be sizeable. The library is also used by Children's French Club, Baby and Toddler Rhyme Time, Book Club, Stretch and Tone, internet access and picking up recycling bags. The zone warden also holds a drop-in session to assist those needing help with the internet.

I am concerned that, in consideration of all these factors, it could be argued that Essex County Council would not be fulfilling its statutory service if it downgraded Mersea Library.

Also, I would be interested to know if the DCMS libraries team has been told of these proposed changes. This is a statutory requirement laid upon Local Authorities before going to public consultation, and, finally, whether the proposals and scheme of rating has been properly scrutinised.

With regards

Cllr Patricia Moore,
Borough Councillor for Mersea and Pyfleet Ward