

The Library Matters - Report to West Mersea Town Council 4th April 2019

A reminder that WM Library was reviewed using questionable and spurious data and been placed in Tier 3 by Essex County Council. This effectively means that unless a community group is prepared to take it over it will be closed. The process by which a community group starts that process is by making an Expression of Interest to Essex County Council which they claim will not be binding.

There are two overarching groups: SOLE - Save Our Libraries Essex which has sought legal advice and MILE Mersea Island Library Enthusiasts, our local lobbying group. MILE have suggested WMTC write to ECC essentially to test the waters. WMTC also need to be very wary of an ECC expressed intention for WMTC to lead on an EOI including managing a future volunteer led library and assigning space.

The suggested draft text for the letter is:

START OF DRAFT

You have placed West Mersea library in tier 3 which means that, unless a community plan emerges, you intend to close it. We must stress that we oppose the closing of our library, that it would be a breach of your statutory duty in relation to the provision of a library service in the county and that we challenge the data on which your consultation is based.

You are urging community groups to indicate a willingness to engage in the process of engagement and have stressed that this would not be taken as any obligation to take over the running of the library. We would add that nor would it amount to any acceptance of the validity of the exercise on which you are engaged.

West Mersea Town Council considered this matter on..... but were unable to take a meaningful view. If you wish us to engage then we need the following minimum information;

What cash support will be available from ECC,
What provision will be made for ECC library staff to be available for our library,
Will there be access to the ECC library online borrowing facility,
Will there be access to the ECC books, audio and visual stock,
What support will be available for the building in which our library is housed,
What period of time will ECC support any arrangements a community library group may devise.

END OF DRAFT