

Our Local Studies Library

I am speaking to express opposition to the proposals contained in the report entitled '*Library Service Improvement Plan*' which went before the Leisure Scrutiny Committee on 20 January.

If the staffing of our Local Studies Library were to be cut to one unqualified librarian, whose main job was to make appointments for people to visit the Library, it would be a disaster. Without expert knowledge on hand, many people – including me - would not know where to start to find the material they are looking for.

What is currently one of the best local history services in London with 6-7,000 inquiries a year and 59 hours of opening, would become one of the poorest, with only 25 hours of appointments available. The report admits this when it states: "*It is unlikely that heritage services would be able to meet current performance targets for use and satisfaction levels.*"

It is hard to believe that a Council which has had the foresight to restore Valentine's Mansion and thus secure its heritage, should contemplate losing our expert local history librarian - an irreplaceable and invaluable resource.

The report also recognises that the Local Studies Library provides far more than historical knowledge of our Borough when it states: "*Local Studies and Archives help to contribute to a sense of place, enabling people to build their sense of belonging through finding out about the past.*"

At the Leisure Scrutiny Committee on 20 January Councillor Weinberg said: "*we are not doing away with librarians...*" let's hold him to that. After all, as the sales pitch goes: 'Once it's gone, it's gone!'