



1. Building

The question concerns the actual Crown Street Library Building. IF under known covenants on the building, it is accepted the building can only be used as a library, then surely it is not saleable. If the council tried to change this I am sure they would meet with a different set of people that would be up in arms over it.

Any change to the use of the building would be sensitive and some of the possible suggestions would lead to possible greater unrest.

2. Two libraries

The current plan calls for there in effect to be two libraries. The lending library and the rest (Local Studies, Reference, computers etc.).

- This will mean that it will be easier to close those parts that are not legally required.
- People will tend to visit one or the other, currently they may visit one of the libraries, but are exposed to the remainder and can be tempted to engage in these areas (unlikely under the proposals).

3. Access to documents

A significant point was raised, during one of the meeting I attended that showed the member questioned did not seem to understand the use by anyone accessing the Local Studies area concerning the access to Crown Street Library.

If one looks at the library catalogue, you will soon see that many items are listed as Central Library and others as Crown Street. Central Library is the material on the working floor and readily accessible by visiting public. Crown Street is the material stored at basement level and only accessible by staff.

A question was asked concerning access to the material in the basement (Crown Street). It was suggested that anything requested from the store could be available by the next day!!! This is an impossible way of doing any meaningful research.

- - If one starts a line of study and then comes across a reference to something that is in the store, makes a request and then has to return the following day, to find that that item now leads to another, it would be the following day and the following day etc. and get nowhere - - currently, within the working constraints of the staff, references can be obtained as soon as practicable, thus enabling research to continue. The way suggested would basically end meaningful research. (If the person doing the research lived within the main Darlington area the work may just about be done, but, imagine if the person lives on the outer parts of Darlington they would be always on the bus going back and forth.)

4. Has the changes elsewhere actually worked

Much was made of the fact that Darlington was simply following what other councils had already done and amalgamated services. My question is what is the evidence from these same (quoted) councils as to the effectiveness or otherwise of their actions – did it work?

5. Move costs / repair costs

There seems to be a glib attitude that the move costs (approx. £1M) can be met by extra borrowing and this only amounts to £25,000 per annum. The £25,000 only covers the capital repayment and even at 5% per annum, the interest initially runs at £50,000 per annum therefore taking a total of £75,000 out of the income for each of the next forty years. This equates to sacking two people. It also means that the council borrowing rises and unlike the Education Building Project (which generates rent and therefore should be essentially self funding) there are no extra income streams to offset the new borrowing.

Surely by reducing borrowing, less repayments would be made and more of the income could be used?

The repairs to the Crown Street Building however looks like they would come from income and whilst there are a number of things to do, there always is on old and listed buildings, the projects do not all have to happen at the same time, but can be spread over time. Suggesting that these costs roughly meet those of the proposed move is a ruse to mislead the public as time scales were not given.

6. Bias towards the Civic Theatre.

It appears that much of the problems of funding for the Library Service is that the Civic Theatre – Hippodrome – is absorbing much of the available budget, the statement was made that the Library only attracted about ten percent of the Darlington population, how much of the population does the theatre attract?

It is good that the theatre is to be upgraded / restored and new facilities for children added, but it seems at the cost of all other services.