

**QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR**

**Question submitted by:** Councillor Ian Poyser

**To Cabinet Member:** Cllr Pat Patel, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure and Sport

**Question:**


Dear Cllr Patel, Thank you for promptly answering my previous question about public consultation on the future of Plympton library services. A journey I hope we don't been to embark upon. On a recent visit to Plympton Library I was shocked to discover that the meeting room at the library was still 'closed' to the public due to COVID19 risk and the lack of ventilation. All other council library meeting rooms in the city are currently open and available for community & business use. Keeping the public and staff safe while using the library should be paramount, however, it seems like such a disappointment to leave this space unused especially as community space is an absolute premium in the local area. From what library management have told me, the room was well frequented by many user groups and businesses before the pandemic started. The room has professional media and kitchenette facilities. Given that we Cllrs and council teams are all being encouraged to look at revenue generating opportunities as well as cost saving measures, it would seem sensible to reopen this space and raise an income to offset library operational costs. It would be useful to understand, if the COVID19 risk to public health has changed since the original decision to close the room and/or what costs are required to install suitable ventilation. A number of simple low cost fixes have been discussed. Should there be no available S106 money to undertake this work, any council investment would need to be backed up with a realistic business case to recover CapEx costs. The library will have historical room booking that could be used to estimate the potential income should the room be reopened. Please could I kindly ask that this matter be reviewed again, so we the room can be reopened for community use? Thank you for your time. Kind regards Cllr Ian Poyser

**Response:** ( for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

Thank you for your question about the meeting room at Plympton Library, which as you know was unavailable during the Covid pandemic.

The Library Service reopened for normal business in line with the government's four-step road map to recovery, and now operates in effect as it did prior to the pandemic. However, the Library Service, following advice and guidance from Health and Safety and Facilities Management colleagues, is unable to re-open the meeting room at Plympton as there is no natural airflow in the room. Without natural airflow, there is an increased possibility of transmission of Covid and other viruses, and this will be exacerbated as Covid cases increase (as they are now) as we move into winter

The Library Service is working with those same H&S and FM colleagues to seek a solution. We are, for example, monitoring CO2 and also engaging with independent ventilation specialists. It is in the Library Services' (and therefore the Council's) best interest, and also to the benefit of customers, to have the meeting room open as soon as possible, and this we are working hard to achieve.

**Signed:** 

**Dated:** 21 October 2022