

Estover Library

When Estover Community College was identified as Plymouth's One School Pathfinder Project it was an opportunity for a complete re-design and re-build of facilities on the site on Miller Way, Estover. From the start a Dual-use Library was part of the plan at the front of site to ensure ease of access for the public and complete safeguarding for our children. This new library opened in September 2010, funded by public money and designed jointly with Plymouth Museum Service.

A modern, light, bright, purpose built design configured to allow student use at one end and public use at the other. Linked to newly installed IT, and wireless, the Library has a designated space for computers, currently there are 5 with space to increase. It has a meeting room, an office, accessible toilet facilities and the entrance has both steps and a ramp, making it accessible to all.

Local membership of Estover Library has increased considerably, the previous Library was located in the centre of the old secondary school and was over three levels with steps and a circular stair case with no toilet facilities, IT or disabled access. Our current Library caters for all users.

Exactly the points being criticised in the current situation with the other Libraries across Plymouth!

In addition to the local community, Estover Library serves children and adults from the four schools on site: Tor Bridge High (Secondary Academy), Tor Bridge Primary (Local Authority Primary), Cann Bridge Special (Local Authority SLD School) and Plymbridge Nursery (Local Authority). Two further Primary Schools at Leigham and Thornbury also make good use of this Library. Its location on Miller Way is a key travel to work route in the city which could be promoted to many more potential users.

Regular events have increased in response to public need. Estover Library is regularly used by Councillors and our MP Johnny Mercer for their Surgeries. It has hosted a number of health related events promoting healthy lifestyles and is open throughout the week and on Saturday mornings. During the school holidays the Summer Reading Challenge is very popular. Staff based here are very open to developing the offer as required.

The Consultation states that there is a need to have all Libraries open at the same time and on the same days and providing exactly the same services to improve take up by residents in our City. I question the need for this and would suggest instead what is vital is that signage is clear - days and hours of opening are clearly displayed and as a resource, Libraries are advertised and promoted more actively.

There is no more important skill in life than Literacy - for everyone. To improve the quality of life for residents, to raise aspirations for our children and young people a Library, in my view, is non-negotiable. Enabling everyone to have free access to a variety of literature, fiction and non-fiction books, ebooks, audio books, digital magazines and access to computer facilities through their Library is, I believe, an essential element of our Community resource.

I do not believe the alternatives being suggested, such as pop up options, would ever meet the needs of those who are elderly or have accessibility difficulties or are on low incomes. A two mile distance to the next nearest Library does not sound a lot, but for those who use public transport, this is two buses away - not safe for young children and not easy for our elderly members.

Ours is a growing community - with lots of new housing on this side of Plymouth. Let's promote the benefits of Estover Library to old and new community members alike and keep our Library open as a cultural enrichment and resource hub for those who live and work in this region of Plymouth.

Please, let's keep Estover Library OPEN!

Liz Dunstan - Principal, Tor Bridge High