



# August 2010 Newsletter

## Dear Neighbour,

The Village Library campaign has been our main focus over the past couple of months, and this newsletter will bring you up-to-date with the latest developments. However, the Library isn't the only facility under threat, as we explain below.

### Proposed Closure of Public Toilets

#### Website

Councillor Chris Maine contacted BVRG recently to warn us that there are plans for further Lewisham Council spending cuts in Blackheath Village:

"... the Mayor's other plans ... include the closure of the automated toilets across the borough...

[We] are concerned about the impact of this on Blackheath (particularly if the Library toilets are not available for public use) and are raising the issue within the Council.

I think it might help if others who share our views also registered their concerns.

In past we have tried to get the Mayor to support a scheme that encourages local businesses (i.e. pubs and restaurants) to allow public use of their facilities in exchange for a discount in business rates - a scheme successfully adopted in Richmond...."

If you object to the toilet closures, please contact the Mayor, and copy us and the local Lewisham councillors. If you support the scheme that Chris Maine has outlined above, please mention this when contacting the Mayor.

Mayor Sir Steve Bullock's contact details:

Mayor's Office  
Civic Suite  
Town Hall  
Catford SE6 4RU

Tel: 020 8314 6193

Email: [steve.bullock@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:steve.bullock@lewisham.gov.uk)

The Mayor also has a website: <http://www.mayorsteve.co.uk/>

### Save Our Library

As members will be well aware, Lewisham Council announced recently that it proposes closing Blackheath Village Library by 31st March 2011.

## **Campaign to Keep a Library in the Village**

BVRG has decided to campaign against the complete closure of the library jointly with the Blackheath Society (BSoc), and the Blackheath Village Library Users' Group (BVLUG). The BVRG steering committee feels that joint action has most impact, and will be able to bring to bear the combined membership of the three organisations; in situations like this, the number of objectors is critically important for the likely success of the campaign.

## **Central Organising Group**

COG, the Central Organising Group of the campaign against the library was formed recently, and holds meetings of representatives of BSoc, BVLUG, and BVRG, to ensure co-ordination and sharing of information.

## **Joint letter to Lewisham Council**

BVRG, BSoc, and BVLUG were joint signatories to a letter sent recently by Gillian Gadsby of BVLUG to Aileen Buckton, Executive Director for Community Services at Lewisham Council.

The letter, which is available on the BVRG website, sets out the objections of the groups to the closure of the library. It also sets forth how the groups propose to work with Lewisham Council to try to find a solution acceptable to all parties.

Contact Details:

Ms Aileen Buckton [aileen.buckton@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.buckton@lewisham.gov.uk)  
Tel: 020 8314 8107

## **Age Exchange Option**

One option being investigated for the Library at the moment is its possible move into some of the Age Exchange's present space, and the sub-letting by the Council of the present Library building.

A freedom of information request by BVRG has found that the Council holds the lease on the present building until 2023, and there are no break clauses; however, reasonable sub-letting is permitted, so this option has some potential.

This is only one potential option, however, and the groups represented by COG are interested in hearing from anyone with ideas for other possible options. Please contact the BVRG if you would like to share your ideas.

## **Petition**

A petition is being organised in both written and web form. You can sign at Blackheath station on Saturdays, and the Framers' Market on Sundays. Details of the online petition will be circulated shortly.

## **2nd Public meeting**

The initial public meeting on the closure of the library was held at short notice, at an inconvenient time, in a not very convenient location for Blackheath Village (7.30pm on Monday 19 July, at St. Matthew's Academy).

Because of the difficulties many members of the COG groups, and other people, have reported in attending the meeting, COG is pressing for a second meeting between residents of Blackheath Village and library users, and Lewisham Council representatives. This is expected to take place in late September. BVRG will inform you of the final timing of the meeting.

## **Objecting to the Library Closure**

The support of BVRG members individually is also very important in maximising the chance of keeping the Library open - please write to the Mayor if you object (details above), and copy us and the MP and local councillors:

Heidi Alexander MP (Labour) [heidi.alexandermp@parliament.uk](mailto:heidi.alexandermp@parliament.uk)

Chris Maines (LibDem) [CllrChris.Maines@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:CllrChris.Maines@lewisham.gov.uk)

Amanda De Ryk (LibDem) [CllrAmanda.DeRyk@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:CllrAmanda.DeRyk@lewisham.gov.uk)

Kevin Bonavia (Labour) [CllrKevin.Bonavia@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:CllrKevin.Bonavia@lewisham.gov.uk)

When writing, you might be interested in drawing attention to the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, which lists the duties of Library Authorities (of which Lewisham Council is one!) to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service".

Section 7 of the Act can be seen [here](#). It is quite short and clearly sets out the duties of councils.

You can also write to the minister, Ed Vaizey at [vaizeye@parliament.uk](mailto:vaizeye@parliament.uk). Ed Vaizey is responsible for Communication, Culture and the Creative Industries, and has statutory powers to powers to hold an enquiry and declare the local authority to be in default of its statutory obligations.