

# NO TO AUSTERITY: YES TO LIBRARIES!

The General Election result showed that people want to see a challenge to the cuts in our public services and an end to austerity and inequality. As Theresa May's government goes into free fall, Lambeth Council should be standing up for our communities, not closing libraries. The LP manifesto stated that under a Corbyn-led government libraries will be preserved and valued 'as vital social assets'.

Lambeth needs to change. It is now the most unequal borough in UK, according to research from the Runnymede Trust, with 50% of young black males unemployed – a shocking and shameful fact. By closing Minet library, which served one of the most deprived areas of Lambeth, the council has robbed the community of access to a library service and to the life chances we know they provide. Lambeth residents have continued to challenge them on the impact on equality of their library closures. Rather than listen they have continued to keep the doors locked. Even their own equality impact assessment stated: "It is not possible to mitigate the impact of the unstaffed neighbourhood libraries on groups of vulnerable people who rely on staff in their local library for support." Local residents have rightly demanded that their councillors represent them but so far have been totally dismissed.



Right across Lambeth, people are asking how the council can press on with its disastrous library plans despite the fact they are far more expensive than saving a service which supports and enriches the lives of so many. Two of our libraries are now almost staff-less which has had a devastating effect on the service they can deliver while Minet and Carnegie remain closed. Carnegie library is set to be replaced by a pay-to-use gym and a small room of books and computers.

Councillors tell us repeatedly that they have to make tough choices in the face of government cuts but when it comes to our libraries, the facts speak for themselves:

- the cost of keeping Minet and Carnegie closed and denying access to the communities they served, has exceeded the cost of keeping them open!
- the dodgy deal with leisure company GLL to install gyms in these libraries will cost us £3 million!

**In fact, the whole service – of 10 professionally staffed libraries - could be retained and protected for far less than is being spent to destroy them.**

As if this isn't scandalous enough, and as diggers prepare to start work in Carnegie library, the council now has very serious questions to answer about its deal with Greenwich Leisure Ltd. Lambeth is now one of only a handful of councils currently under investigation over its duties under the Public Libraries Act 1964.

**We continue to call on Lib Peck and her administration to scrap these library plans before they not only destroy a much needed service but also drag the name of *Lambeth* Labour further through the mud. There can be no shame in admitting a mistake and doing the right thing. Defend the 10 says **STAND WITH THE MANY, NOT THE FEW AND GIVE US BACK OUR LIBRARIES!****