



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport

**Michael Ellis MP**  
Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism  
4th Floor  
100 Parliament Street  
London SW1A 2BQ

[www.gov.uk/dcms](http://www.gov.uk/dcms)  
[enquiries@culture.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@culture.gov.uk)

Councillor Stephen Harker  
Leader of the Council  
Darlington Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Feethams  
Darlington County Durham DL1 5QT

15<sup>th</sup> TO2019/00333/DC  
January 2019

Dear C<sup>llr</sup> Harker,

In my letter to you of 7 November 2018 I explained that in view of the decision by Darlington Borough Council (DBC) to undertake a fresh consultation about its library service, including retaining the central library at Crown Street, there appeared to be no good reason to continue consideration of the existing formal complaint under section 10 (1) (a) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (the Act) that DBC was failing to carry out its duties relating to the public library service imposed on it under the Act. My letter noted that unless we received any representations to the contrary from the complainant by 7 December 2018, the Department would discontinue its current investigation of the complaint.

I can confirm that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) received a representation from the complainant raising some further concerns, including that there was a delay in the council announcing further library service plans and holding the proposed consultation, uncertainty about the future of the Cockerton branch library, and about DBC's previous withdrawal of the mobile library service.

Officials sought clarification from DBC officers about the points raised and received further information about the library service proposals and the plans for consultation, including to retain the central library at Crown Street and Cockerton libraries as part of DBC's statutory library service. Having considered these matters and in view of the current fresh consultation on proposals for the library service, I can confirm that I have authorised the Department to discontinue its investigation into this complaint.

As noted in my letter of 7 November, the duties under the Act are on-going and the Department will continue to monitor DBC's compliance with its duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service in the same way as with any other local authority. In addition, if the Department receives representations relating to any subsequent decisions by DBC about its library service following the consultation, we will carefully consider these to determine whether they should be treated as a new formal complaint.

A copy of this letter is being provided to the complainant.

*Yours Sincerely,*  


**Michael Ellis MP**  
Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism