

# Cockerton library 'stay of execution'

A LIBRARY threatened with closure looks to have won a stay of execution following a campaign by local people.

Cockerton library was earmarked for closure by Darlington Borough Council last year as the cash-strapped authority tries to cut 20 per cent from its annual budget.

But the service now looks to have won a reprieve following an announcement by council leader Bill Dixon that the authority's cabinet will be asked to consider keeping the library open, with reduced hours, for at least 12 months.

The Friends of Cockerton Library, which was formed by residents less than a month ago, met council representatives at a meeting chaired by Darlington MP Jenny Chapman yesterday, where they discussed the proposal.

By Vicki Henderson

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The Friends will meet today to discuss further plans and consider its response to the proposals.

Councillor Dixon said: "Working with the Friends of Cockerton Library group, a possible option has been suggested and this option will be given serious consideration ahead of cabinet on February 22.

"The suggested option is to operate reduced opening hours at the library while we work with the Friends group to establish any workable options for the library going forward.

"These proposals have been subject to extensive consultation to ensure residents'



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views and ideas are taken into consideration.

"Throughout the consultation process, we have welcomed viable proposals suggested by residents as to how our budget proposals could be

better positioned and we are happy to work with those residents to try and make any such options work for the community within our budget constraints."

The threat of Cockerton library's closure, which has more than 10,000 users, sparked a huge reaction from the community, with a petition against the proposal collecting about 3,000 signatures within days.

David Cuthbertson, chairman of the friends group, said: "I felt that we had a positive meeting. The friends are meeting today where we will be discussing the proposals further."

A final decision on the future of the library will not be made until the full council meets on March 1 to agree its budget.