

PART ONE- (CLERK RESPONSE IN RED)

Good morning [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to put your concerns in writing. I will address each of the points you have raised within your email, responding in red italic text for ease of reference.

As your complaint relates in part to my role, I have shared both your correspondence and my response with the Chairman, who has been copied into this email in line with the Council's complaints procedure.

Dear Members of Camelford Town Council,

I am writing to formally lodge a complaint regarding the handling of the proposed relocation of the Camelford Library, the conduct surrounding discussions on this matter, and the manner in which public concerns have been addressed.

I refer to my original correspondence, which outlined substantial concerns regarding the proposed move, including the apparent dismissal of public opposition, lack of financial clarity, uncertainty surrounding lease arrangements, and the wider impact on the town centre and Town Hall building.

Following the recent council meeting, I remain extremely concerned that both councillors and members of the public may have been misled regarding several important matters connected to this proposal.

Firstly, concerns have repeatedly been raised publicly regarding the condition of the Town Hall roof, with statements suggesting that major replacement works are required. However, it is my understanding that the roof was replaced approximately 15 years ago and that a recent drone inspection identified no major defects, only a small area of the cupola requiring attention. If this is correct, I believe the public deserves accurate and transparent information rather than exaggerated claims being used to justify relocation. Furthermore, I understand that responsibility for the Town Hall roof, along with the alleged damp issue within the Pop In Centre, rests with the Town Trust rather than the Town Council. I also understand that the Town Trust has offered the Town Council the use of space within the Pop In Centre at no additional cost and under the same lease conditions currently in place, on the proviso that suitable alternative accommodation within the building is found for the Pop In to continue operating.

No concerns have been raised about the current condition of the Town Hall roof. The reference you mention relates to a discussion at a meeting where it was queried why the roof had been included in indicative costings. (The roof was only referred to in one of the three estimated costings).

For transparency, the Town Trust had asked the Council to consider a full repair and replace lease. As part of standard budgeting practice, the Council considers potential future large costs and sets aside funds annually where appropriate, similar to how funds are reserved for works such as the Churchfield car park resurfacing. If the Council were

responsible for full repair and maintenance of the Town Hall, potential future liabilities would need to be identified and planned for. Following discussions with architects last year, the roof was noted as a possible long-term cost. Given the scale of the estimate, it was reasonable to include it in indicative figures, alongside other potential items, to ensure prudent financial planning.

It appears that the options presented by the Town Trust may have been misunderstood or misrepresented, resulting in councillors voting on the basis of incorrect or incomplete information supplied by the Town Clerk. If that is the case, this raises serious concerns regarding the integrity of the decision-making process.

Secondly, members of the public were informed by councillors and some library staff that responsibility for repair and maintenance of the library lift rested with the Town Trust. I understand this to be incorrect, as responsibility for the lift sits with the Town Council under the terms of the lease agreement. Again, I am deeply concerned that inaccurate information may have been circulated publicly.

The current lease confirms that the Town Council is responsible for the maintenance of the lift. However, there is a lack of clarity within the lease regarding responsibility for full replacement of the lift.

In practice, the Council has consistently undertaken and funded repairs to the lift, and this is well understood by both library and office staff. Therefore, I am confident that staff would not have advised that this responsibility sits with the Town Trust.

The confusion appears to relate specifically to long-term replacement rather than day-to-day maintenance and repair.

There have also apparently been complaints regarding the building being cold. If such complaints exist, I would ask why the Town Trust has not been formally approached regarding these concerns and why these matters appear instead to have been used to support arguments in favour of relocation.

Reports about the building being cold have come up informally, but this is only a minor point and not a main reason for the move. Any day-to-day issues are managed as they arise. The decision to relocate is based on a range of factors, such as long-term suitability and accessibility, not just heating or any single issue.

I also wish to raise concerns regarding governance and impartiality during this process. It is my understanding that the role of the Town Clerk is to professionally advise the Council in an impartial manner, not to express personal opinions or place themselves in a position that could improperly influence councillors' decisions. Based on observations from meetings, I do not believe this distinction has been properly maintained.

The role of the Town Clerk is to provide professional advice to the Council, which includes sharing knowledge and experience of the day-to-day operation of Council facilities when requested. On several occasions, I was specifically asked by Members to provide my perspective as a member of staff working within the Town Hall.

Furthermore, I do not believe library employees should be involved in discussions regarding a potential relocation decision. Equally, any individual who may personally or financially benefit from any future use of the existing Town Hall building should not be involved in discussions, influence the process, or participate in any vote connected to this matter.

The employees were asked to attend by the Council.

I have also reviewed the publicly available minutes and cannot identify any clear formal vote approving the relocation proposal itself, only a vote to “investigate a lease on another premises.” Given the seriousness of this issue and the level of public concern, this lack of clarity is wholly unacceptable.

The Council resolved to “move forward into lease negotiations with the west country schools trust”. The lease is currently being negotiated with solicitors, and then council will vote again on whether to sign the lease.

As stated in my original correspondence, more than 700 people signed a petition opposing this proposal. This represents a significant proportion of the community and should not be dismissed or treated lightly. Members of the public also attended council meetings and spoke passionately against the proposal, yet their concerns appeared to receive little meaningful consideration.

The financial and strategic concerns surrounding this proposal also remain unanswered, including:

- What contingency plans are in place should any proposed lease not be renewed after the initial term;
- What protections exist regarding public funds invested into refurbishment or renovation works;
- Whether any such public expenditure could be recovered;
- Why alternative options within the Town Hall, or elsewhere, appear to have been dismissed without transparent explanation;
- Why requests from the Town Trust for face-to-face meetings to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution do not appear to have been meaningfully pursued.

The Town Hall is an important and historic focal point within Camelford. Removing the library from the centre of town risks leaving another significant building vacant and causing further damage to the vitality of the town centre.

I therefore formally request:

1. That this complaint is formally acknowledged and recorded;

Your complaint has been formally acknowledged and recorded in accordance with the Council’s complaints procedure.

2. That this complaint and the concerns raised within it are read in full at the Council meeting on 19 May;

Your request for the complaint to be read in full at the Council meeting on 19 May will be noted and referred to Members for consideration as part of the meeting process.

3. That the Council provide clear written clarification regarding:

- the condition of the roof;
- responsibility for lift maintenance;
- complaints regarding heating and building condition;
- and any declarations of interest connected to this matter;

The points you have raised regarding the condition of the roof, responsibility for lift maintenance, heating and building condition, and declarations of interest have been addressed within this response to provide clarification.

4. That the Council clarify whether a formal vote approving relocation has ever taken place;

For clarity, a formal vote to enter lease negotiations took place at the Full Council meeting on 24th February 2026, where Members resolved to proceed.

5. That this matter be fully reconsidered and subjected to a transparent new vote following proper public consultation.

Regarding your request for the matter to be reconsidered and subjected to a new vote, the Council resolved to enter into lease negotiations. As noted above, a further vote will take place once the lease has been reviewed by Members. If Members wish to revisit the original decision to enter into negotiations, this would require a written request from four councillors, and Members have been made aware of this process.

I understand that under the Council's complaints procedure I should receive a response within five working days, and I look forward to confirmation that this complaint has been formally logged.

Yours faithfully,



I hope this response is helpful and provides clarity, and I am happy to address any further questions if required.

Best Wishes

Laura Murphy
Camelford Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Town Hall
Market Place
Camelford
Cornwall
PL32 9PD

PART TWO

Dear Members of Camelford Town Council,

Thank you for your response to my formal complaint. Having carefully reviewed the contents of your reply, I remain extremely concerned by the inconsistencies, lack of clarity, and apparent attempts to minimise legitimate public concerns regarding the proposed relocation of Camelford Library.

I do not consider many of the issues raised within my original complaint to have been adequately addressed and, in several instances, your response has only reinforced my concerns regarding transparency, governance, and the integrity of the decision-making process.

Firstly, regarding the Town Hall roof, your response states that “no concerns have been raised about the current condition of the Town Hall roof” and that references to roof replacement costs were included merely as part of prudent financial planning. However, these projected costs have clearly formed part of the narrative used to justify relocation. My understanding remains that the roof was replaced approximately 15 years ago and that a recent drone inspection identified only minor works required to the cupola rather than any significant structural defects. If this is correct, then presenting substantial roof liabilities within relocation discussions risks creating a misleading impression for councillors and members of the public alike.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that the Town Trust offered a continuation of the existing lease arrangement in addition to discussions surrounding a full repair and replace lease. If a continuation of the current arrangement remained available, then many of the extensive projected repair liabilities repeatedly referenced become significantly less relevant to the decision currently being pursued. This raises serious concerns as to whether councillors were provided with complete and balanced information prior to voting to proceed into negotiations.

In addition, during the February meeting it was stated that the Council would not be required to repair or replace the lift and that funds which might otherwise have been allocated for this purpose could instead contribute towards relocation costs. However, I note that projected lift-related expenditure has nevertheless been included within costings associated with remaining at the Town Hall. This appears inconsistent and risks materially distorting the financial comparison presented to Members and the public.

Secondly, with regard to responsibility for the lift, your response states that you are “confident” staff would not have advised members of the public that responsibility rested with the Town Trust. However, this directly conflicts with accounts provided

by members of the public who were informed by library staff that they were “waiting for the Town Trust to repair the lift.” This demonstrates that misleading information has, in fact, been circulating publicly.

I have also received reports that library staff have openly stated that “the move is going ahead” despite no formal vote approving relocation ever having taken place. Such comments are entirely inappropriate while the matter remains unresolved and publicly contested.

Your response regarding complaints about the building being cold similarly fails to address the central issue. The Council has occupied the Town Hall for many years, and these concerns are now apparently being raised within the context of supporting relocation. If genuine issues exist regarding the building, the obvious question remains why the Town Trust has not been formally engaged to resolve them. Instead, these matters appear to have been used selectively to strengthen the case for moving the library.

As stated in my original correspondence, more than 700 residents signed a petition opposing this proposal. This represents a significant proportion of the community and should not be dismissed or treated lightly. Members of the public also attended council meetings and spoke passionately against the proposal, yet their concerns appeared to receive little meaningful consideration.

The financial and strategic concerns surrounding this proposal also remain unanswered, including:

- What contingency plans are in place should any proposed lease not be renewed after the initial term;***
- What protections exist regarding public funds invested into refurbishment or renovation works;***
- Whether any such public expenditure could be recovered;***
- Why alternative options within the Town Hall, or elsewhere, appear to have been dismissed without transparent explanation;***
- Why requests from the Town Trust for face-to-face meetings to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution do not appear to have been meaningfully pursued.***

The Town Hall is an important and historic focal point within Camelford. Removing the library from the centre of town risks leaving another significant building vacant and causing further damage to the vitality of the town centre.

I also remain deeply concerned regarding governance and impartiality throughout this process. The role of the Town Clerk is to provide professional and impartial procedural advice to Members. It is not appropriate for officers to become

personally involved in influencing contentious policy decisions, particularly where there is significant public opposition. While you state that Members asked for your views as a member of staff working within the building, I do not believe such involvement was appropriate given the circumstances and the potential influence attached to your position.

Equally concerning is the involvement of library staff within discussions surrounding relocation. Public confidence depends upon neutrality being maintained at all times. Any individual who may directly or indirectly benefit from future arrangements connected to the Town Hall or relocation proposal should not participate in influencing the process.

Importantly, your own response confirms that the Council merely resolved to “move forward into lease negotiations with the West Country Schools Trust.” This is not the same as a formal decision approving relocation itself. I can still identify no recorded vote where Members explicitly approved permanently relocating the library from the Town Hall. This distinction is fundamental and cannot simply be blurred or implied away. Entering negotiations is not equivalent to democratic approval of the proposal itself.

I also note that more than 700 residents signed a petition opposing this proposal, alongside substantial public attendance and objection at council meetings. The scale of public concern cannot simply be dismissed as a minor disagreement. Many residents now feel that decisions are progressing despite overwhelming community opposition and without genuine consultation or transparency.

In light of the above, I formally reiterate my requests that:

- 1. This complaint and all concerns raised within it are read in full at the Council meeting on 19 May;**
- 2. The Council clearly confirms whether any formal vote explicitly approving relocation has ever taken place;**
- 3. Full clarification is provided regarding:**
 - the lease options offered by the Town Trust;**
 - responsibility for lift repair and replacement; (which is clearly stated in the lease as “To maintain the lift at the property”)**
 - the inclusion of lift costs within financial comparisons despite statements made at the February meeting;**
 - and any declarations of interest or potential conflicts connected to this matter;**
- 4. All viable alternatives to relocation are transparently reconsidered;**

5. No further progression toward relocation takes place without a clear formal vote specifically approving relocation following proper public consultation.

This matter has now created significant division within the community and risks seriously undermining public confidence in the Council's governance and decision-making processes. Residents deserve transparency, accuracy, and accountability when decisions involving substantial public funds and important community assets are being considered.

Yours faithfully,