

**Cambridge Library Enterprise Centre**  
**- Audit & Accounts review submission**  
**Cllr Ian Manning**

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## 1. Intro/overview

This is my submission to the review being carried out into the eventual rescinding of the decision to move ahead with a "Enterprise centre" on the third floor of Cambridge Central Library.

I've split my comments into two broad areas: what went wrong & why the process was stopped.

## 2. What went wrong, if anything?

### 2.1 Was a procedure broken?

From my point of view I think we need to stress that officers did not do anything 'wrong' *in the formal sense*: no procedure was strictly broken; due diligence was carried out to the standard operating procedures.

That said, the italics above are important: the very fact that the decision was rescinded, after having been made for the second time at committee, shows that *something* didn't work.

## 2.2 Procedures versus lateral thinking

The problem with the process is, in my view, a classic civil service one, put at its most basic thus:

*If officers follow procedure to the letter, then only things that fit into that procedure will be picked up on; however if officers use their own initiative and go beyond (or behind) the procedure, then the Council is accused of being 'officer led' or technocratic.*

It would be interesting to know if there is any academic thinking on solving this matter.

## 2.3 One way of solving 2.2: continual review

Procedures should be continually reviewed in the face of decisions, *even 'good' decisions*. This will make it less likely that procedures get far away from real world cases.

## 2.4 Another solution to 2.2: project resourcing

One of the highlighted aspects of this process is the sheer number of meetings between Council officers and KORA with apparently no one, not even the chair/vice chair of committee, knowing.

An overview of the amount of time being spent on projects across the Council could be regularly presented to committee members: assuming standard PRINCE2 or similar type project management methodology, this information should already exist, so it should not take extra work to compile.

Any project taking more than a defined % of officer time, or number of hours, could be highlighted. This is imperfect, but would have caught the Kora case.

## 2.5 Cabinet to Committees

It is very important to note this is a project that started under the Cabinet system, but continued in the committee system. Under the cabinet system I believe it is very likely this decision would have gone through.

This raises two subsequent questions:

2.5.1 Did the previous cabinet member for this let the chair & vice chair of the current HC&I committee know about this project?

2.5.2 Are there other similar projects in flight across the Council which started under cabinet and are continuing under committee? If so, what are they?

### **3. Why was the process stopped?**

#### **3.1 The public reaction**

“Public outcry” is definitely an over used term, but is an apt one in this case.

I imagine that the HC&I meetings were the most well attended ever, or at the very least, attended by the highest number of new attendees (meaning members of the public who’d never been to a Council meeting before).

This is one measure of the strength of feeling over the issue from the people we serve.

#### **3.2 The ‘reveal’ of Mr Perrin’s company director ban came from an external source**

This is incredibly important: that a member of the public, Phil Rodgers, found out about this, not a Cllr, or Council official, and this ultimately is what led to the deal not being signed, is the single most embarrassing fact in the whole saga.

### **4. What next?**

#### **4.1 Background check**

One single procedure that should be put in place asap is a 192.com (or similar) check on any individual that is meeting with Council officers formally over a project. There is only a trivial charge for this, and it would have picked up a company director ban.

#### **4.2 Officers are responsible for reporting to the whole committee**

Officers should be made aware that they are responsible for keeping the whole committee informed on *anything* they think *might* be sensitive.

Currently the chair is being treated almost as if they were a cabinet member. This must stop.

#### **4.3 Questions 2.5.1 & 2.5.2 need to be addressed**

#### **4.4 Procedures 2.3 & 2.4 should be implemented**

Note that 2.4 will help to achieve 4.2.