

County Council Meeting – 17 July 2012

CABINET MEMBER STATEMENT

Woking Library

Woking Library re-opened on Monday 25th June 2012 after a major £850,000 refurbishment. This was funded through a major Woking town redevelopment programme in partnership with WBC. The whole library has been redesigned - a new entrance created in Gloucester Walk with the intention of creating a cultural 'corridor' to The Ambassadors; The Lightbox and the forthcoming WWF-UK's state of the art Living Planet Centre. The interior of the library has been enlarged by incorporating the old staff administrative areas into the new public floor space. Staff offices have now been relocated to the first floor of Gloucester Chambers.

The refurbishment has enabled the service to install new, quality shelving, flooring and furniture. Imaginative and creative use of colour and lighting has created the WOW factor. A major new children's library within the space has also been created. In addition, SCC has invested £200K in new stock. This equates to 20,000 new books, weighing in at 7 tonnes - all of which were processed by the library teams in the run up to opening!

As standard, wi-fi is now available and designated laptop seats have been purchased to encourage laptop use throughout the library space.

This is a major refurbishment of SCC's largest and busiest library and has attracted very positive media coverage in Surrey and further afield. The service is currently promoting the new library to professional library organisations across the UK and it will feature on the Designing Libraries website - a major Global resources. A You Tube video of the new library has also been made by our media team (search 'Woking Library' on YouTube) and another film was made recently to support David Hodge's recent presentation at the Local Government Association's annual conference in June.

We are in the process of gathering detailed performance information, but in the first week we had circa 7,382 people through the doors which was a 4% increase on same period in 2011.

The performance of the library is being monitored closely and I'm please to report we have seen a 41% increase in book issues, a 7.6% increase in people through the door and a 50% increase in new borrowers.

Three weeks after the opening and the library continues to get praise - here are a random selection of comments:

- *Excellent job on this Library. the best in Surrey, maybe even the best in the UK!*
- *Great Library. Very Modern and very comfortable. What Woking needs and the staff as helpful as ever.*
- *Noah (Age 8) - I love the new Library. It's Great! (I love the pod spinning chairs)*
- *A truly fantastic Library. It has a real community feel and the children's section is so kiddie friendly and well stocked. Thank you*
- *Very Impressed with this new Library. Staff extremely helpful and environment is fun and encouraging to revisit.*

- *Fantastic, the whole family love it.*
- *Really Fantastic new look. Can't wait to bring my son in to read him stories in the children's section*
- *Very much nicer, you can breath. More space and a bigger range of books and dvd. Lovely environment :)*
- *Best Library in Surrey. Improvements in all respects*
- *The new Library is wonderful. It is fantastic to see that even in the current times funds are properly directed to such a fantastic and worthwhile project.*
- *What a stunning Library - well done!*
- *Lovely new library and pleased with the selection of new children's books*
- *I love this library so much. This is awesome Especially the kids area. FANTASTIC*
- *This is so posh. Hope will encourage more people to use this blessing*
- *Well done and Thank you*
- *I am very impressed with how it has been laid out and presented. Something else to be proud of in our Woking*
- *Thanks you for giving us such a brilliant pretty library. We are so fortunate*
- *A brilliant asset to the town. Thank you!*
- *What a brilliant place!*
- *The stock is GREAT. All those lovely new books!*

Helyn Clack
Cabinet Member for Community Services and the 2012 Games
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