



THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN EPSOM & EWELL

**Surrey County Council Local Committee in
Epsom & Ewell**

29th September 2003

KEY ISSUE:

This report updates the Local Committee on the Library Service in Epsom and Ewell and seeks Members views on the future direction of the service.

SUMMARY:

This report shows the current context to library services in Epsom and Ewell. It identifies local issues and service developments, and seeks the opinion and advice of the Local Committee on self reliance issues and the future direction of the mobile library service.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Local Committee in Epsom and Ewell should

- (i) Note the range of service developments in Epsom and Ewell.
- (ii) Advise on the role of the Library Service in promoting self reliance.
- (iii) Advise on how to respond to the opportunities offered by the Mobile Library Service in developing library provision.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN EPSOM AND EWELL

1.1. Library services in Surrey are provided through a network of 52 libraries and six mobile libraries. Epsom and Ewell is served by four static libraries and one of the mobile libraries. The service is provided to all ages from very young children to older people who are housebound or who live in residential homes.

1.2. Each of the 52 static library service points is allocated to one of five bands of library that defines the level and scope of services offered. The banding policy influences the range of services provided in a particular library but the network of libraries provides access to the whole range of services.

1.3. Of the four static libraries serving Epsom and Ewell, Epsom is a Band 1 or major town library, Ewell is a Band 2 or town centre library, and Ewell Court and Stoneleigh are Band 5 or community libraries.

2. PERFORMANCE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN EPSOM AND EWELL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Appendix 1 shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Epsom & Ewell compared with the average for those in the same band. Whilst issue figures continue to fall, visits have increased countywide and significantly in the larger libraries, with an increase of 50,000 visitors to Epsom Library this year.

2.2. We are currently undertaking research on patterns of use in libraries as well as consulting with users and non-users on ways to improve the service. A survey in 5 libraries, one in each band, showed that the largest age band of users in all libraries was that between 20 – 40 years of age. The results of this research will inform the changes we make to the way we offer our services in all libraries. Our target is to increase issues as well as visitors across all libraries.

2.3. A recent Audit Commission report “Building Better Library Services” stressed that libraries needed to improve the quality of the buildings from which they offer services, ensure that services are pleasant to use – learning, in particular, from bookshops, and build awareness among non-users of the services that libraries can offer. The Office for Public Management has been undertaking stakeholder engagement (including elected members) to assist the management of the service in finding one or more strategic partners to invest in libraries. This is one of the strands of the “Transforming Surrey Libraries” programme, designed to improve libraries and increase use.

2.4. The Library Service in Epsom & Ewell has responded to the latter through a wide range of promotional activities.

- Across Epsom & Ewell a wide range of displays and stock promotions take place which aim actively to promote reading, increase the use made of the stock and broaden readers horizons. The “Pile ‘em High” promotion at Ewell Court has proved popular. This takes the bookshop approach to the presentation of stock with stock being displayed on tables. Central to this is the provision of multiple copies. The promotion aims to provide the public with popular hardback titles but also through a wide range of paperback fiction to encourage readers to try something new at the same time as taking a title by a popular author. As research shows many customers are only in the library for a short time it provides a method of quick selection for them. The promotion is running in six other libraries in Surrey. Stoneleigh have a smaller version of this promotion called “Read”. A children’s Pile ‘em High called “The Incredible Heap” is now well established and proving to be very popular.
- Ewell Library has been featuring the BBC Big Read with a display featuring books in the top 100 placed where people can pick up an extra book whilst they queue at the counter, which has proved very popular. They have also had an interesting display called Hidden Treasures which encourages children to try different types of books.
- The staff at Epsom have participated in various open events including the Ebbisham Centre Autumn Festival and the International Day, running story sessions with crafts. Staff from Stoneleigh Library joined in with the Stoneleigh Fayre which took place on a Sunday and attracted several new users to the library. The Friends Group at Ewell Court has run successful events at Easter, Halloween and Christmas.
- School visits take place throughout the year at all libraries, as well as visits from Playgroups. Stoneleigh Library hosted visits from 3 Years of Cuddington First School and Ewell Court had nine groups from West Ewell Infants.
- The Summer Reading Scheme, The Reading Planet, was extremely popular in all libraries, with 70 children who had read 10 books collecting certificates at Ewell Library.
- Stephen Smith ran a Poetry workshop in the Community Room at Stoneleigh Library. Wendy Perriam ran a Creative Workshop in the Ebbisham Centre and Claire Tomalin gave a talk about her biography of Samuel Pepys (winner of the Whitbread Prize 2003) to an audience of over 100 people at Bourne Hall. The Museum put on a Pepys exhibition highlighting his connections with the borough, which was highly praised by Ms Tomalin.
- Ewell Library runs 2 Reading Groups, one for adults and one for children, and at Epsom Library there are three groups, one for adults,

one for children, “Chatterbooks” funded by Orange, and a Poetry Group. The Virtual Reading Group at Stoneleigh Library is popular with people who like to comment on the books without attending a meeting.

2.5. Improving the quality of library buildings is a more difficult task. Some minor improvements to furniture have been made over the last year.

- The Friends’ Group at Ewell Court have purchased slatted noticeboards and magazine racks for the library. The funds from the Local Committee given to the Friends Group for the library has enabled us to improve the children’s library with the purchase of a “Once upon a Time” rug and a settee. Equipment has been purchase to allow children to listen to story tapes whilst in the library. The children and their parents really appreciated the improvements and the staff have received many compliments.
- In the Stoneleigh Library Community Room, the addition of an acoustic ceiling, with money from the Learning and Skills Council Disability Fund has been a real success, eliminating the echo effect and also improving the lighting as the new ceiling is white.
- The Local Access Group donated two strollers to Epsom Library for the elderly and disabled, to help carry their books in the library.

The views of local members on ways to improve the shelving and presentation of stock and refurbish the physical environment of libraries in Epsom & Ewell through existing no growth budgets would be welcomed.

3. PROMOTION OF SELF RELIANCE THROUGH THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN EPSOM & EWELL

3.1. The Library Service has responded to the County Council policy of promoting self reliance by developing and improving access to literature and tools for literacy, information, e services and lifelong learning through the network of libraries and through community based delivery where suitable and viable.

3.2. The People’s Network project, a national initiative funded from the National Lottery via the New Opportunities Fund, has enabled the installation of Internet terminals for public use in all Surrey libraries. The smallest libraries have a minimum of two terminals for public use. The provision of ICT facilities in libraries enables electronic access to information, services and learning opportunities for self-directed library users, assisted and supported by library staff. All library staff have received information technology training to increase their skills in supporting library users.

3.3 The Community Room at Stoneleigh Library is being used for an increasing variety of Adult Education classes, including languages and arts and crafts. They are currently displaying the excellent results of the Art for the

Terrified class. It is also used for surgeries by the local MP, Chris Grayling and the Community Police Officer.

3.4. The Library Service responds to the cultural diversity of Surrey by the provision of bookstock and other material in many languages other than English in the larger libraries. Smaller libraries can also obtain this stock on demand.

3.5. A service agreement with the WRVS ensures a library service to housebound people, delivered by volunteers. The service operates from all libraries in Epsom & Ewell. 20,000 bookmarks have been distributed across all libraries in the county to promote the housebound service to volunteers and users. The bookmarks were produced in partnership with the National Osteoporosis Society and at no cost to the library service. A coffee morning was held at the Ebbisham Centre as a thank you to 9 volunteers and to discuss their needs.

3.6. The Library Service, in partnership with the local Health Authority, makes contact with each child and his/her parent or carer at the age of eight months through the Bookstart initiative. An attractive pack of books and material to encourage word play, using books with babies, and information on library membership, is given out at the eight months hearing check clinic. 410 packs were distributed in Epsom & Ewell in the last year.

3.7. By the autumn of 2003, 15 libraries will have adaptive technology on one PC to enable disabled people to fully benefit from on-site on-line services. The 15 libraries have been selected after discussion with Surrey Association for the Visually Impaired, and spread around the county having regard to the concentration of visually impaired people. Two of the libraries are Epsom and Ewell. The PC will be located on a wheelchair-friendly computer workstation. The terminal will have a track ball mouse, large monitor and a headphone. It will use Dolphin Supernova reader magnifier screen magnification and screen reading software. The service will be promoted through community groups representing the visually impaired.

3.8 The Librarian from High Down Prison organised a competition for inmates which resulted in a display of paintings and poetry at Bourne Hall and a presentation of prizes by Fay Weldon at the prison. She also organised a visit by Philip Pullman to the prison reading group and both prisons have received funding for the literacy project, Stories onto Tape.

3.9. These initiatives aim to bring reading and learning to children, parents and carers and create a positive awareness of the library service that will bring them into the library in the future.

4. MOBILE LIBRARY PROVISION

4.1. In Surrey four mobile libraries visit 163 sheltered housing units every four

weeks as well as 167 village and similar isolated communities every week or fortnight. A larger mobile library serves communities in ten urban areas every week. A dedicated mobile library visits 210 residential homes for elderly and disabled people across Surrey every three months to exchange deposit collections.

4.2. Issues of items from the Mobile Library Service have declined by approximately 30 % between October 1998, when the last major changes to the timetable schedules took place, and June 2003. The service is still used by about 7,500 people, the majority of whom are elderly people who rely on it for their reading and social contact.

4.3. The mobile library fleet consists of three new vehicles, a new Residential Homes Mobile, the new Urban Mobile, and one new standard mobile library. A second new standard mobile library is due for delivery in late 2003. There is a need to review provision to determine how far in the future we will require further replacement vehicles for the other two mobiles.

4.4. The Community Services Committee of the County Council agreed in March 1998 that the Mobile Library Service policy is to serve communities that are more than two miles from a static library. Stops are provided which achieve an average of more than ten book issues per visit. The length of each visit is determined by the formula of 1.5 book issues per minute. Sheltered housing complexes receive a visit of at least 20 minutes every four weeks.

4.5. A small number of changes to the Mobile Library schedules are proposed from January 2004 to match demand as effectively as possible to the available vehicle resources and build into the schedules sufficient time for maintenance of the vehicles. Members have been informed of any changes in their electoral division.

4.6. The Library Service is undertaking a more wide ranging countywide stop by stop analysis based on the number of issues of items over the last year. It will follow the Committee policy of 1998 to identify the stop length required to deliver the general public service to the village and isolated communities on a minimum fortnightly basis. The minimum length of the four weekly visits to sheltered housing complexes would remain at 20 minutes.

4.7. This review of provision offers an opportunity to find the capacity within the Mobile Library schedules to promote self reliance through library services.

4.8. Comments and ideas from members of the Local Committee on specific areas in Epsom and Ewell where library provision could be developed through the Mobile Library Service are invited.

4.9. The Mobile Library Service has the potential to support social inclusion work by offering new and traditional approaches in enhancing access to reading, books and ICT. The resources committed on the service could be

used cost-effectively to help address social inclusion whilst ensuring that the current users still receive the service that they value.

4.10. The vehicles could promote self reliance by visiting clinics and forging a tangible link between the Bookstart scheme and the Library Service and also extend the service beyond its traditional boundaries by serving travellers and visiting hostels and shelters.

4.11. There may also be the capacity to add new stops to the schedules in response to demographic changes such as population growth as a result of new housing developments and introduce stops at railway stations when commuters are returning in the evenings and at out of town shopping centres.

4.12. The design of the new vehicles has the flexibility to accommodate ICT provision. Some funding has been made available in the budget for the Libraries Division of Community Services.

4.13. In terms of cost per issue the costs of mobile libraries are similar to static libraries. With 7,500 active users of the current mobile library service, alternative individual delivery services that have been suggested such as books by mail, village shop libraries and transporting users to main town libraries are not cost effective.

4.14. The service is a countywide one with schedules that go across District and Borough boundaries. Serving over 500 locations in the county with a fleet of mobile libraries requires detailed timetable planning.

4.15. There is a particular issue in timetable planning concerning the current and likely potential for children's use after school. There are unfortunately more communities requiring a service at this time than vehicle capacity available. A survey has been carried out of the use after 3pm by children of the current stops which will help in identifying those communities which could have a service at other times and free up that crucial time for other children. Every effort will be made to accommodate local preferences for service within a countywide objective of making the maximum public use of the vehicles.

4.16. Mr Chris Phillips, the Area Manager with countywide responsibility for the Mobile Library Service, is offering to meet members informally over the next few weeks to discuss the local position in further detail.

4.17. Annex 2 lists the current timetable of stops for Epsom and Ewell along with an analysis of the number of items issued at those stops.

4.18. The advice of members of the Local Committee on possible options to respond positively to the opportunities offered by the Mobile Library Service will be greatly valued.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Local Committee in Epsom & Ewell
30 September 2002

Appendix 1

PERFORMANCE OF THE SERVICE IN EPSOM & EWELL

The table below shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Epsom & Ewell compared with the average for those in the same band in Surrey.

Library	Hours Open Per Week	Issues 2002/03	Visits 2002/03	Public Floor Space In Square Metres	Issues Per Hour	Visits Per Hour	Issues Per Square Metre	Visits Per Square Metre
Epsom	54.0	366,241	449,343	1,215.0	130.4	160.0	301.4	369.8
Average Band 1	49.5	437,910	437,868	1,000.7	170.1	170.1	437.6	437.5
Ewell	43.5	296,590	219,965	556.27	131.1	97.2	533.2	395.4
Average Band 2	40.4	228,407	181,768	468.99	108.9	86.6	487.0	387.6
Ewell Court	26.5	45,204	37,088	149.22	32.8	26.9	302.9	248.5
Stoneleigh	26.5	46,942	49,416	163.95	34.1	35.9	286.3	301.4
Average Band 5	21.5	38,483	39,393	122.56	34.4	35.2	314.0	321.4

In 2002/03 Mobile Library 5 served 2097 stops and failed to visit 86 stops due to vehicle problems. It issued 34,884 items.

Appendix 2

MOBILE LIBRARY STOPS IN EPSOM & EWELL

Address	Community	Frequency	Day	Time	Minutes open	Target issues per visit	Actual Issues per visit Oct 2002-June 2003
Collier Close	West Ewell	Fortnightly	Wed	13.45-14.15	30	45	14
Riverview	West Ewell	Fortnightly	Wed	14.20-15.00	40	60	21
Suffolk Road	Worcester Park	Fortnightly	Wed	15.10-15.30	20	30	9
Langley Vale	Epsom Downs	Fortnightly	Wed	11.50-12.20	30	45	3
	Epsom Wells	Fortnightly	Wed	15.50-16.15	25	38	23
Matthias House	Epsom	Once in 4 wks	Wed	16.10-16.30	20	30	37
Servite House	Worcester Park	Once in 4 wks	Wed	10.00-10.40	40	60	45
Worcester Court	Worcester Park	Once in 4 wks	Wed	10.50-11.10	20	30	20
Norman Collyer Court	Epsom	Once in 4 wks	Wed	11.55-12.30	35	53	18
Badgers Court	Epsom	Once in 4 wks	Wed	14.15-15.05	50	75	33
Oakwood	Epsom	Once in 4 wks	Wed	15.10-15.45	35	53	19
Oakmead Green	Epsom	Once in 4 wks	Wed	15.55-16.15	20	30	23
Saddlers Court	Epsom	Once in 4 wks	Wed	15.10-15.40	30	45	24