SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

TASK GROUP FEEDBACK

Local Committee for Mole Valley
2 February 2005

SERVICE AREA:

Library Service

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

Members met on 14 January 2005 to scrutinise the performance of the Library Service. A copy of the paper presented for discussion is attached. The discussions with the Member Task Group focused on:

Library usage
Members discussed the pattern of library use and possible reasons for customers using the service less. Mole Valley libraries continue to see high usage; local people are using a wide range of the services, not just books.

Promoting services
Service promotion was discussed with suggestions for further publicising the new mobile library timetables. Members discussed Bookstart and other projects to encourage children and schools to enjoy books and libraries. The development of internet use has also enabled easier access to services and presents library staff with many opportunities to reach greater numbers of people.

The range of services
Libraries provide a huge range of services; DVDs, CDs, story tapes and videos prove popular. The development of internet use has also enabled easier access to services, as many extensive reference sources are now available online. Library staff are always looking at opportunities to be responsive to community need and also to generate income as appropriate.

Library buildings
Pressure on building space is always an issue, and some libraries are in need of decoration. Resourcing this work can be a challenge and libraries face a long-term plan to address building improvements.

KEY POINTS OF NOTE:

The committee is asked to note:

  (i)   the satisfactory performance of the Library Service
  (ii)   the modified mobile library service, with newly established timetables across the district.
  (iii)   the continuing challenges to the library service of alternative means of obtaining and using information, and access to books and other resources for leisure.
  (iv)   the efforts of library staff to maximise income to further increase bookfund wherever possible.

Report by David Gollin, Chairman of the Local Committee on behalf of the Task Group

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THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN MOLE VALLEY

KEY ISSUE:

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

SUMMARY:

This report shows the current context to library services in Mole Valley. 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 Mole Valley should

(i)   Note the range of service developments in Mole Valley.
(ii)   Advise the Library Service on the future range of service developments in Mole Valley in response to "Framework for the Future.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN MOLE VALLEY

1.1.Library services in Surrey are provided through a network of 52 libraries and six mobile libraries. Mole Valley 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 Mole Valley, Dorking is a Band 2 library or town centre library, and Ashtead, Bookham and Leatherhead are Band 3 libraries or small town libraries.

2. PERFORMANCE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN MOLE VALLEY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Appendix 1 shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Mole Valley, for 2003/04 and for 2002/03 compared with the average for those in the same band.

2.2 Numbers of issues and visits have fallen in all libraries, but this must be balanced by the increase number of electronic visits across the county, 200,000 more than in 2002/03. Continued improvement in electronic access, as part of the County Council's e service strategy, will effect physical use of the libraries. Work, however, continues to try to increase both the number of visitors and the number of issues.

2.3 In January 2004, Leatherhead increased its opening hours by 1.5 hours to with 9.30 opening, by a more efficient use of existing staffing, and the introduction of clamping in the car park has made it easier for customers to park when visiting the library. Bookham will be increasing its hours in the same way early in 2005.

2.4 A survey on the use of computer terminals shows computers in all libraries are heavily used. Total logins across the county in one week (21-26 June were 15,582).

2.5 PLUS (Public Library User Surveys) were run in Ashtead and Bookham during October/November 2003. Figures show that the public are least satisfied with the opening hours and most satisfied with staff helpfulness and knowledge.   However, opening hours are seen as poor or very poor by only 6.6% for Ashtead and 6.2% for Bookham.

2.6 Surrey Community Survey (2003). Broadly speaking, services in Surrey are rated highly, with many achieving impressive satisfaction scores in absolute and relative terms. Among *residents as a whole*, those services which are regarded most favourably are:
- household waste sites;
- libraries;
- the Fire and rescue service

MORI usually finds that service users are more satisfied than residents as a whole, a pattern reflected across most of the service areas. Among users of services in Surrey, libraries are the most highly rated service, cited by nine in ten residents, (92%), eight percentage points higher than five years ago. Encouragingly, Surrey performs above average compared to similar authorities; the County Council's rating is located at the top of the MORI nominative chart of recently studied county councils. Satisfaction with the library service among users in Surrey is also higher than recent national data (85%). Of great encouragement to the Council is that satisfaction among library users is among the highest MORI has ever recorded – a two-fifths (42%) being 'very' satisfied. Evidence of improvement can be taken from the fact that there has been a twelve percentage point increase in satisfaction compared with the findings from the 1998 Epsom & Ewell and Surrey residents' study. High levels of satisfaction among library users also reflects findings from the focus group research held in late September/ early October 2003 where participants were extremely praising of local libraries. (Source: MORI Report January 2004)

Important library services
Q Which two or three, if any, of the following do you think are most important for the County's library service to provide?

Top 8 mentions
A wide range of books	69%
Internet/e-mail for public use	28%
Request service, where you can order books from other Surrey libraries	24%
Basic computer/internet training	23%
Different opening hours	22%
Multiple copies of new books	19%
Making computers available for personal use	19%
Toilets for customer use	18%

2.7 In 2003 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport published "Framework for the Future", a strategy for public libraries, to which local authorities have to show how they are developing their services under four headings

- A - Books, reading and learning

- B - Digital citizenship
- C - Community and civic values
- D - Building capacity to deliver transformation

Within this national strategic framework, The Library Service in Mole Valley has made a local response to each of these themes.

3. BOOKS, READING AND LEARNING

3.1 Across Mole Valley, a wide range of displays and stock promotions take place which actively promote reading, increase the use made of the stock and broaden readers' horizons. They often respond to national promotions such as The Big Read and the Orange Prize and regional promotions such as The Great Thames Read, with events planned to celebrate "Three Men in a Boat". The "Incredible Heap' promotion at Leatherhead and has proved popular and has been extended to Ashtead and Bookham. This takes the bookshop approach to the presentation of stock with books for children being displayed on tables. Central to this is the provision of multiple copies. The promotion aims to provide 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.

3.3. Reading Groups are run at Bookham, Dorking and Leatherhead. The reading groups encourage the customers and staff to discover new authors and discuss their likes and dislikes in literature.

3.4. The Library Service, in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust, 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. 970 packs were distributed in Mole Valley in the last year. The government have agreed to fund Bookstart nationally from April 2004, it having been funded locally for the last 3 years.

3.5. Story times for the under fives are held regularly at all libraries in Mole Valley.

3.6. The annual summer reading scheme for children has been consistently successful in 2003, 845 children participated in it at the libraries in Mole Valley, and this year 925 took part, including 332 at Dorking. This is part of the library service's contribution to the Surrey Education Development Plan, to encourage children to continue reading during the summer holidays.

3.7. Libraries in Mole Valley work in partnership with local schools to maintain a programme of library visits to encourage young people to use the library and to foster a love of reading. Visiting schools include South Bookham, Downsend Lodge, Dawnay, New Lodge Nursery, St Paul's, St Peter's and

Fetcham Village Infants.

3.8. 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 number of terminals for public use in libraries in Mole Valley are twelve in Dorking and six in Ashtead, Leatherhead and Bookham. 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.

3.9. Libraries in Mole Valley take advantage of our unique position to encourage people into learning in an open and friendly environment. There is much latent demand for learning in libraries in Mole Valley. Staff will be supporting the first informal steps towards ICT learning in all libraries in Mole Valley through Silver Surfers sessions, and running BBC Webwise taster events. Successful sessions have been run at all four libraries.   Dorking Library has an "In Touch" advisor holding surgeries for 2 hour sessions. She gives advice on careers and helps with writing CVs etc.

4. DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

4.1. The People's Network terminals provide access to ICT services in all libraries in Mole Valley. A popular use of this is to produce a CV and e mail it to a prospective employer.

4.2. Dorking and Leatherhead Libraries have adaptive technology on one PC to enable disabled people to fully benefit from on-site on-line services. The libraries were selected after discussion with Surrey Association for the Visually Impaired. The PC is located on a wheelchair-friendly computer workstation. The terminal has a track ball mouse, large monitor and a headphone. It uses Dolphin Supernova reader magnifier screen magnification and screen reading software. The service is being promoted through community groups representing the visually impaired.

4.3. The development of an interactive web page on the libraries part of the Surrey County Council website to show the mobile library timetables and allow a search for the location and frequency of stops and the next scheduled visit will improve access to information about the service.

4.4 In March the library service opened Enquiries Direct (EDi) to provide a virtual enquiry service available to public and staff via e mail, telephone or fax and on line reference tools via internet access for all registered library users. EDi provides an information service to staff and public. Availability initially aims to cover all library opening hours. Reference materials Know UK and Xrefplus are now available through the library website to all library members.

5. COMMUNITY AND CIVIC VALUES

5.1. 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.

5.4. A service agreement with the WRVS ensures a library service to housebound people, delivered by volunteers. The service operates from all libraries in Mole Valley.

5.5. In autumn 2003 comments and ideas were invited from members of each Local Committee on specific areas where, in response to demographic changes, the Mobile Library Service offered an opportunity to develop library provision. Parish Councils and other local community groups also expressed views. Through more cost effective countywide route scheduling, all current stops have been retained and across the county it will be possible to achieve an additional eight hours service per week, introducing 19 new stops to communities not previously served. The new stops in Mole Valley are

a) A small number of less well supported weekly stops will become longer fortnightly ones. These are at North Holmwood, Newdigate, Beare Green, South Holmwood, Chart Downs, Goodwyns Estate, Westcott and Abinger.

b) Introduction of a fortnightly stop on Tuesday afternoons at Mid Holmwood.

c) Introduction of a fortnightly stop at Harrington Close, Leigh on Monday afternoons which may attract after school use.

d) The timing of the fortnightly stop at Aperdele Road, North Leatherhead will be changed from Friday morning to Thursday afternoon to try and attract use at the end of the school day at All Saints School and the length of the stop doubled.

The advice of members of the Local Committee has been very helpful in trying to ensure the Mobile Library Service meets the needs of the people of Mole Valley and matches demand as effectively as possible to the available vehicle resources.

5.7 As part of our link with schools, libraries in the borough welcomed work experience students from schools including The Priory, Ashcombe, Royal Alexandra and Albert Schools, Therfield and St Andrew's and Leatherhead had also facilitated work placements from Queen Elizabeth Training College. also had students working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award doing work at the library. A group of jobseekers visited Dorking Library as part of their

employability programme.

5.8 Libraries in Mole Valley aim to encourage community identity. Dorking Library took part in Heritage Weekend with a member of staff showing two groups on a guided tour around Pippbrook House and also in the Mole Valley Artsalive programme. Staff from Dorking also visited the Mayflower Day Centre to discuss favourite books as part of the Big Read. Bookham Library participated in the Bookham Village Day, with an Olympian theme.

5.9   The Library Manager at Dorking has visited the Redlands Community Playlink to discuss the library and run a number of storytime sessions.

5.10 Library staff have also been participating in the North Leatherhead Project at All Saints with the "Living with Books in North Leatherhead" project which aims
- to raise awareness of the value of books,
- to raise awareness that books were available free of charge from the library service
- to raise the profile of the value of reading with your child

Parents are now beginning to borrow books from the collection.

6. BUILDING CAPACITY TO DELIVER TRANSFORMATION

6.1. Changes in lifestyles and technology have led to inevitable changes in the ways people perceive and use libraries. These changes have translated into a reduction in the number of books issued over the last ten years, although the significant investment in ICT services has reversed the trend of reducing numbers of visitors.

6.2. Our response to the challenging context within which we operate has been to create a transformation programme that emphasises the need to invest in ICT, modernise library environments and seek an investment from a commercial partner.

6.3. There is evidence in Surrey with the new Epsom library and nationally that investment in a modern, improved library environment translates into increased use. 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 and ensure that services are pleasant to use. The Libraries Division in Surrey has an annual budget for building maintenance of just over £100,000 but to clear the backlog of outstanding maintenance is estimated at £1,700,000.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Surrey Community Survey 2003
Framework for the Future. DCMS 2003

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Appendix 1

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PERFORMANCE OF THE SERVICE IN MOLE VALLEY

The table below shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Mole Valley compared with the average for those in the same band in Surrey.
2003/04

Library	Hours Open Per Week	Issues 2003/04	Visits 2003/04	Public Floor Space In Square Metres	Issues Per Hour	Visits Per Hour	Issues Per Square Metre	Visits Per Square Metre
Dorking	42.5	242,644	157,341	335.90	113.3	73.5	722.4	468.4
Average Band 2	40.4	212,995	175,296	468.99	103.8	85.4	454.2	373.8
Ashtead	32.5	133,407	85,771	161.92	80.2	51.5	823.9	529.7
Bookham	32.5	117,248	82,762	144.84	71.5	50.5	809.5	571.4
Leatherhead	34.0	121,369	95,164	280.42	72.5	56.8	432.8	339.4
Average Band 3	34.2	116,592	85,721	283.84	67.8	49.9	410.8	302.0

2002/03

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
Dorking	42.5	258,350	168,992	335.90	116.9	76.5	769.1	503.1
Average Band 2	40.4	228,407	181,768	468.99	108.9	86.6	487.0	387.6
Ashtead	32.5	134,907	88,901	161.92	79.8	52.6	833.2	549.0
Bookham	32.5	122,136	88,165	144.84	72.3	52.2	843.2	608.7
Leatherhead	32.5	131,717	96,884	280.42	77.9	57.3	469.7	345.5
Average Band 3	34.0	124,051	91,604	283.84	70.1	51.8	437.0	322.7