



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE  
(Reigate & Banstead)**

**Library Services in Reigate and Banstead –  
Progress Report 2008**

**21 September 2008**

**KEY ISSUE:** A progress report on Libraries in Reigate & Banstead

**SUMMARY:** Surrey County Council Libraries have seen significant improvements over the past 12 months in opening hours and services, with further significant changes to come. This report details the impact on libraries in Reigate and Banstead, and provides information about future stages in a wide-ranging programme of transformation of library services.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Local Committee (Reigate and Banstead) is asked to:**

- (i) Note the content of the report on progress in libraries in Reigate and Banstead.
- (ii) Agree to receive a report on the evaluation of the changes in opening hours in Spring 2009.

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The past year has seen significant changes in Libraries across Surrey. In September 2007, a report came to this committee containing details of the fundamental review of staffing and services in Surrey County Council Libraries. In it were details of the methodology and results of the review. The three outcomes of the review were:
- Organisation of the 52 libraries in the network into three strategic Groups (A, B and C)
  - Definition of a service offer appropriate to each group, so that the expectations of library users can be consistently met
  - Improved, standardised and in most cases extended opening hours for all libraries. Across the county network this amounts to 11.4% more opening hours (17.8% in the 25 largest libraries).
- 1.2 The committee was asked to approve changes in library opening hours in Reigate & Banstead amounting to an additional 10 hours 30 minutes per week, across the six libraries.
- 1.3 These improvements represent a realisation of efficiency gains from improved library automation, introduction of self-service technology, detailed analysis of customer and non-user feedback and of changing patterns of use.
- 1.4 These opening hours improvements came into effect on 6 May 2008, after an extensive staff restructure exercise, in all libraries except Tattenhams, where new staff needed to be recruited.
- 1.5 The report below details the impact on each of the libraries in Reigate and Banstead, with a brief report on the current status of each of them.
- 1.6 This report does not contain comparative year on year data on the use of libraries in Reigate & Banstead this year, because the changed opening hours mean that it would not be a comparison of like with like. At the end of September 2008, the new opening hours will have been in place for five months, and will be evaluated methodically during October to establish which times of day have been most successful in attracting library users, and which least. Further adjustments can be proposed if the evaluation shows where use has exceeded or has not met expectations.
- 1.7 The next stage of the transformation programme for Libraries is the second phase of the staff review, and the restructure of the management and professional and specialist staff.
- 1.8 The new structure is innovative and forward looking, and designed to work in harmony with Surrey's strategic themes of Safer and Stronger Communities, Children and Young People, and Health and Well-being. Public Libraries nationally have a proven track record of positive

contribution in all three areas, and the potential to be even more effective with a new focus.

- 1.9 The new structure will have a strong Virtual Services stream, reflecting the integral importance of a high quality IT environment for Libraries, and the huge and increasing importance of inline information and remote delivery of library services via the Internet. Currently, Library members can be able to access information and services wherever they are, at home, work or place of education, and manage their library membership remotely. This is the growth area in library services. The trend towards online communities and methods of managing lifestyles will be reflected in the direction that Library services take in their development.
- 1.10 The new structure recognises the importance of engaging with partners and stakeholders in determining the future development of libraries as gateways in the community to information, informal learning and access to services. The new structure will have a Programme Team, engaging with partners to develop services that reflect the three strategic themes of Safer and Stronger Communities, Children and Young People, and Health and Well-being.
- 1.11 Local Library Managers will be supported by a strong, locally-focused operational management structure.

## **2 ANALYSIS**

- 2.1 This is a brief progress report on each of the six libraries in Reigate & Banstead.

### **2.2 Banstead Library**

- 2.2.1 This Group B library was refurbished in 2007 to provide full self-service borrowing and return for library users. The programme of automation is one of the key drivers for the release of capacity to enable improvements to opening hours and services.
- 2.2.2 The opening hours at Banstead have been extended from 38.5 per week to the Group B standard of 42 per week, with 9am opening every day, all day on Wednesday, and until 5pm on Saturday. Closure at 7pm on one evening instead of 8pm on two has caused a small number of adverse comments.
- 2.2.3 The Banstead History Centre continues to promote research into local and family history, and is an effective example of the Library delivering a valuable service in partnership with local voluntary organisations. Volunteer stewards with a wealth of experience and knowledge.

- 2.2.4 A sensitive issue at Banstead Library has been the removal of the informal arrangement to allow advertising banners to be fixed to the railings surrounding the Library grounds. This followed problems with fly posting, and concerns over highway safety.

### **2.3 Horley Library**

- 2.3.1 In 2007, Horley Library received a major makeover, and installation of full self-service borrowing and return technology for library users. Improvements to the building included new décor and units, a new location for the children's library and for the Local History Centre. The refurbishment project benefited greatly from funding from local County Councillors Kay Hammond and Dorothy Ross-Tomlin, enabling the children's' library to have new equipment and furniture.
- 2.3.2 The opening hours at Horley have been extended from 38.5 per week to the Group B standard of 42 per week, with 9am opening every day, all day on Wednesday, and until 5pm on Saturday.
- 2.3.3 A generous local building firm, Mitchell's, has donated a set of patio furniture to enhance further the courtyard at the Library, refurbished with funding from County Councillor Kay Hammond.
- 2.3.4 The prototype Local History Centre in Surrey is located in Horley Library. In its new larger location, it continues to encourage research and enhance appreciation of Horley and the surrounding communities, through an enthusiastic and knowledgeable team of volunteers. A sense of place, and belonging to a community, have been demonstrated as key to a sense of well-being. Local History Centres are a prime example of how, with imaginative partnerships, Libraries can contribute to Surrey's strategic themes.

### **2.4 Merstham Library**

- 2.4.1 Merstham Library continues to have excellent links with the community, particularly through the co-location with the Playlinks Toy Library, for families with young children. Activities for parents and children are linked to the Playlinks sessions, and the Library is lively and well-used.
- 2.4.2 Currently, a proposal to create a new community facility in Merstham is under consideration and extensive consultation in the community. If achievable, the Library would form part of it, alongside the relocated GP surgery and health facilities, and the Church of the Epiphany.

### **2.5 Redhill Library**

- 2.5.1 Redhill Library (Group A) piloted improved opening hours after the pilot refurbishment with self-service technology in 2005, so in May 2008, only

minor adjustments to its opening hours were made to bring it into line with Group A Libraries.

- 2.5.2 Redhill Library enjoys particularly good relations with its local schools, welcoming class visits on a regular basis, visiting schools to promote the Library, and staging a number of events each year to encourage children to find the Library a friendly and attractive place.
- 2.5.3 The long-serving Library Manager of Redhill, Marilyn Apsee, retired in July. We pay tribute to her 15 years of service to Redhill Library and its users, and welcome the new Library Manager, Jacqueline Camm-Jones.

## **2.6 Reigate Library**

- 2.6.1 Reigate Library shares premises with the Register Office for Births and Deaths. Both services benefit from co-location, the Library in particular benefiting from the initial visit of parents to register their newborn baby, which gives an excellent opportunity to promote the advantages of library membership and use for families, and the facilities for parents and babies that the Library offers.
- 2.6.2 The Library building is much improved by the replacement of the windows and the restoration of the flat roof. The Library is in a somewhat secluded position in the town, and a priority for the future would be to make it a more visible landmark in Bancroft Road.

## **2.7 Tattenhams Library**

- 2.7.1 Because of a delay in recruiting to vacancies at Tattenhams, the new longer opening hours were not introduced until September.
- 2.7.2 Tattenhams Library has benefited from local member funding from County Councillor Nicholas Harrison, to refurbish the workstations for the public access Internet terminals.
- 2.7.3 Tattenhams Library continues to be a lively and busy hub for Epsom Downs.

## **3 CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 The improvements to opening hours were driven by analysis of user and non-user feedback. User feedback was derived from the regular Public Library User Survey (PLUS) conducted in all UK libraries, and non-user feedback from an extensive lapsed user survey conducted in Surrey.

#### **4 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

#### **6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None

#### **7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the content of the report on progress in libraries in Reigate and Banstead
- (ii) Agree to receive a report on the evaluation of the changes in opening hours in Spring 2009

#### **8 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 Evaluation of changes to opening hours and services will take place during Autumn 2008, and results and recommendations will be available in early 2009.

#### **9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

9.1 After evaluation of the impact of the new opening hours, the results will be analysed, and further proposals for changes, if and where required, will be developed.

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