



THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN RUNNYMEDE

SCC LOCAL COMMITTEE IN RUNNYMEDE

10 December 2004

KEY ISSUE:

This report updates the Local Committee on the Library Service in Runnymede and seeks members' views on the future direction of the service.

SUMMARY:

This report shows the current context to library services in Runnymede. It identifies local issues and service developments, and seeks the opinion and advice of the Local Committee on future service developments.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree:

- (i) That the Committee has noted the range of service developments in Runnymede in response to "Framework for the Future".
- (ii) That the overall direction of developments in libraries in Runnymede meets their aims for libraries.
- (iii) The proposed change in opening hours for Egham library.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN RUNNYMEDE

1.1. Library services in Surrey are provided through a network of 52 libraries and six mobile libraries. Runnymede is served by five 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 five static libraries serving Runnymede, Egham is a Band 3 Library, Chertsey is a band 4 library and Addlestone New Haw and Virginia Water are band 5 libraries.

2. PERFORMANCE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN RUNNYMEDE

2.1 Appendix 1 shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Runnymede for 2003/04 and for 2002/03 compared with the average for those in the same band. The overall picture provided by these figures is affected by Chertsey re-opening in the Autumn of 2002, and closure of Addlestone in February and March 2004. During these periods library users moved between libraries and in general returned to their nearest library when service was restored. The figures for libraries such as Egham and Virginia Water not affected by this are in line with trends across the county.

Falling book issues must be balanced by the increased number of electronic visits to the libraries web site 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 affect physical use of the libraries. Work, however, continues to try to increase both the number of visitors and the number of issues.

2.2 **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%

2.3 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 Runnymede has made a local response to each of these themes.

3. BOOKS, READING AND LEARNING

3.1 Across Runnymede, 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. Libraries respond to national promotions such as The Big Read and the Orange Prize.

The pilot collection of multiple copies of up to date fiction remains popular at New Haw. This takes the bookshop approach to the presentation of stock with books being displayed on tables as well as on shelves and book display equipment. As research shows nowadays many visitors are only in the library for a short time it provides a method of quick selection for them for which they increasingly ask. Smaller versions of promotions known as “Read” operate at Chertsey Addlestone and Virginia Water. Runnymede libraries do book promotions on special topics throughout the year, ranging from National Poetry Day and the Great Thames Read through to Richard and

Judy booklists.

Libraries also seek to promote and develop reading by running Reading Groups, some of which are run by the Friends of the Library. Addlestone library's reading group had an author visit, Chertsey Egham and New Haw have well attended reading groups. National Children's Book Week was marked at Egham by fifty children from the Royal School attending an event with Bernard the storyteller, and at New Haw fifty children from the Grange Community Infants School attended an event with storyteller Charlie Wilson.

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. 740 packs were distributed in Runnymede 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.

3.2. Story times for children are held at libraries in Runnymede, either regularly, as separate events or part of school visits.

3.3. The annual summer reading scheme for children has been consistently successful and last year, 566 children participated in "The Reading Maze" at the libraries in Runnymede. This year's scheme the "Reading Rollercoaster" attracted 569 children. 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.

3.4. Libraries in Runnymede 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 among others: St Paul's, St Anne's, Pycroft Grange and the Playbox nursery.

3.5. 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 Runnymede range from 2 at Virginia Water to 6 at Egham. 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.

3.6. Libraries in Runnymede 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. Staff are supporting the first informal steps towards ICT learning running BBC Webwise taster events. Working with Adult and Community Learning, Chertsey held internet taster sessions in Adult Learners week, and a series of beginning computer courses which were fully booked, including a session on shopping on the internet which helps people starting out with computer skills. Egham has also run internet taster sessions and at New Haw the equipment

shared with the youth project and funded with help from the local committee is well used with many older people in particular using this, with the help of library staff, to develop computer skills for the first time. There have been many positive comments from learners on how this has enriched their lives in a variety of ways.

4. DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

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

4.2. 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.

4.3 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 Xreferplus are now available through the library website to all library members as the online reference shelf.

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.

5.2. A service agreement with Age Concern Runnymede provides a library service to housebound people, delivered by volunteers. The service operates from all libraries in Runnymede and at present there are 13 volunteers and 27 readers.

5.3. 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. Through more effective 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. All services in Runnymede were maintained and a new four weekly stop at Rose Park Mobile Homes development in Ottershaw will be introduced from January 2005.

5.4 Runnymede Local Committee has provided support for a number of improvements in local libraries including new display equipment for New Haw and changes to parking at Chertsey.

5.5 Friends Groups have also been very supportive to their libraries, ranging from providing prizes for children's activities at Addlestone, promoting Chertsey and

Virginia Water libraries at local events , running coffee mornings, buying equipment and running a series of talks in the library at Virginia Water.

6.0 PROPOSED CHANGES TO OPENING HOURS AT EGHAM

6.1 The current opening hours of Egham library are:

Monday 10-5.30
Tuesday 10-8
Wednesday closed
Thursday 10-5.30
Friday 10-8
Saturday 9.30-4

Over the last 10 years the pattern of library visiting has changed. Travelling to the library by car is the norm nowadays whereas previously many users would have walked. People do not want to be caught in the five o'clock rush hour if it can be avoided. Children visit the library with their parents either in the afternoon after school or on the late evening opening. As the library is not near the station, commuters who use the library go home first and visit during the evening. At 10.am there is always a queue of people waiting to come in to the library. The library opening hours need to accommodate these changes in library visiting.

The proposed opening hours to meet these changes would be to retain the two 8pm closings, close at 5pm instead of 5.30pm on Monday and Thursday and open at 9.30am on Monday Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The opening hours would be increased by one hour a week with no extra financial commitment.

Revised hours would be:

Monday 9.30am-5.00pm
Tuesday 9.30am-8pm
Wednesday closed
Thursday 9.30am-5.00pm
Friday 9.30am-8pm
Saturday 9.30am-4pm

The committee are asked to consider and agree these changes as being in line with changes in patterns of library use.

7. BUILDING CAPACITY TO DELIVER TRANSFORMATION

7.1. 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.

7.2. 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 partner.

7.3. There is evidence in Surrey with the new Epsom library and the pilot libraries at Ash and Horsley 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.

7.4 Members have determined that the library budget should be maintained around its current level for the next three years, so plans for significant improvement in services require external investment. Central to the Transforming Surrey Libraries programme is investigating seeking a commercial partner for the management of the library portfolio of buildings although the project is now on hold pending the outcomes of the Policy and Productivity Review.

CONSULTATIONS

Surrey Community Survey 2003

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No new implications

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

None

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PERFORMANCE OF THE SERVICE IN RUNNYMEDE

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

** 2003 – 2004								
Library	Hours Open Per Week	Issues 2003/4	Visits 2003/04	Public floor Space In Square Metres	Issues Per Hour	Visits Per Hour	Issues Per Square Metre	Visits Per Square Metre
Egham	41.5	117,443	90,036	487	56.2	43.1	241.2	184.9
Average Band 3	34.2	116,592	85,721	283.4	67.8	49.9	410.8	302
Chertsey	26.5	72,499	54,792	365	54.5	41.2	198.6	150.1
Average Band 4	28	74,485	65,549	188.74	52.5	46.9	394.6	352.6
Addlestone #	27	43,006	41,353	145	41.4	39.8	296.6	285.2
Average Band 5	21.8	35,343	35,016	122.5	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7
New Haw	25	46,202	43,564	187	36.8	34.7	247.1	233
Average Band 5	21.8	35,343	35,016	122.5	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7
Virginia Water	17	19,829	21,688	110	22.9	25	180.3	197.2
Average Band 5	21.8	35,343	35,016	122.5	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7

***** 2002 – 2003**

Library	Hours Open Per Week	Issues 2003/4	Visits 2003/04	Public floor Space In Square Metres	Issues Per Hour	Visits Per Hour	Issues Per Square Metre	Visits Per Square Metre
Egham	41.5	124,412	93,965	487	57.7	43.5	255.5	192.9
Average Band 3	34	124,051	91,604	283.84	70.1	51.8	437	322.7
Chertsey #	26.5	42,745	31,752	365	31	23	117.1	87
Average Band 4	28	74,256	63,004	188.74	51	43.3	393.4	333.8
Addlestone	24.5	59,806	60,197	145	46.9	47.3	412.5	415.2
Average Band 5	21.5	38,343	39,393	122.56	34.4	35.2	314	321.4
New Haw	25	47,469	54,731	187	36.5	42.1	253.8	292.7
Average Band 5	21.5	38,343	39,393	122.56	34.4	25.2	314	321.4
Virginia Water	17	22,232	23,675	110	25.1	26.8	202.1	215.2
Average Band 5	21.5	38,343	39,393	122.56	34.4	35.2	314	321.4

** 2003/04 = figures based on actual open hours per year

*** 2002/03 = figures based on 52 x weekly open hours

Part years for both Addlestone and Chertsey due to closures