



**THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN
RUNNYMEDE**

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE IN
RUNNYMEDE**

19TH SEPTEMBER 2003

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 self-reliance issues and the future direction of the mobile library service.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Local Committee in Runnymede :

- (i) Note the range of service developments in Runnymede**
- (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 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 provide access to the whole range of services. Budget availability determines library-opening hours. They relate to the size of the library and research into patterns of use. Budgetary constraints mean that changes can only take place in the pattern of opening hours, rather than permanent increases in the total number of opening hours.

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 libraries are Band 5 libraries.

2. PERFORMANCE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN RUNNYMEDE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 *Appendix 1* shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Runnymede compared with the average for those in the same band.

2.2 A recent Audit Commission report “Building Better Library Services” stressed that libraries need to improve the quality of the buildings from which they deliver 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.

2.3 The Library Service in Runnymede has responded to the latter through a wide range of promotional activities across Runnymede a range of displays and stock promotions take place which aim to actively support reading, increase the use made of the stock and broaden reader’s horizons. This includes a bookshop approach to the presentation of stock with stock being displayed on tables and in multiple copies at New Haw known as Pile ‘Em High. The “Read!” promotion at Addlestone, Chertsey and Virginia Water libraries which brings multiple copies of newer fiction titles to small libraries has been well received. As research shows many customers are only in the library for a short time and it provides a method of quick selection and highlighting newer stock, which is very popular.

All libraries are supporting the BBC’s “Big Read” and this year’s summer reading scheme, the “Reading Maze”. Addlestone, Chertsey, New Haw and Egham libraries now all have reading groups and at New Haw, U3A hold their Poetry and History group.

Virginia Water library holds regular story times for children, the readers being supplied by Trotsworth Nursery School and in August had a Teddy Bear's Picnic story time. Egham and Virginia Water had Christmas story times. As part of the "Laughter in the Library" promotion Chertsey had sixty children from Stepgates school to "Storytelling with Bernard" and a visit from the Sunnyside Playgroup. The new "Friends of Chertsey Library" have also started story readings in the library.

In February this year the storyteller Charlie Wilson entertained thirty-six children in the afternoon and in March the Library Manager paid two visits to Thorpe Lea Nursery. Libraries have also run craft sessions, competitions and quizzes for children, including an easter egg competition at Addlestone which St Paul's School did as a craft project attracting over two hundred entries.

School visits continue on an ongoing basis. Chertsey has received visits from Pycroft, Fremantles and Meadowcroft schools; Egham was visited by Manorcrofts School during National Children's Book Week and Addlestone by the Holy Family School, among others.

Libraries also take on school pupils for work experience and Duke of Edinburgh awards on a regular basis.

Libraries also worked with Runnymede Borough and Surrey County Council Youth Development service on a variety of events for children and young people.

Library staff works with Egham Museum, the Runnymede Local History Forum and the Surrey History Centre in supporting the needs of local historians in the Borough, which has a high level of interest in local history and would hope to expand this work in the future.

2.4 Improving the quality of library buildings is a more difficult task. At Egham library front and rear windows have been replaced and a new ramp to provide disabled access has been constructed at the rear of New Haw library. The increase in graffiti problems and other forms of vandalism has continued.

Some improvements have been made with the greatly appreciated support of Friends of the Library at Virginia Water who have provided a kinderbox for the children's area, two computer chairs for the internet terminals, vertical blinds for all the library windows and notices for the car park. The Runnymede Local Committee have provided funds for a modern book display unit for Egham and contributed to replacement of the PCs in the Interactive zone at New Haw which are used both by members of the youth group and library users.

The Otter Plant Centre provided for the refurbishment of Chertsey's courtyard garden, with a bench from the Bourne Valley Garden Centre.

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

3.PROMOTION OF SELF RELIANCE THROUGH THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN RUNNYMEDE

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 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 Learning Centres at Staines, Woking and Weybridge libraries provide free access to a range of self-help learning material and support from learning centre staff. Support comes in the form of helping users when they are encountering difficulties in computer use and can range from an induction to the self help programmes for absolute beginners to helping more knowledgeable users to set up e-mail accounts.

Following the introduction of the new computer contract, as well as free internet access, word processing is also available in all libraries and future access to on-line learning materials is being investigated for all libraries.

3.4 New Haw library continues to develop as a community-learning centre with the provision of classes by Adult and Community Learning, and provides IT learning facilities through equipment shared with the Interactive Zone youth project. Promotional events and "taster" sessions for IT have encouraged many learners to take their first steps into computing, leading some individuals on to further learning experiences and skills.

The learning centre manager is now working on a Family History day for 20th September and a Homework Club, working with local schools and tying in with family learning.

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

3.6 A service agreement with Age Concern Runnymede ensures a library service to housebound people, delivered by volunteers. 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.

3.7 Work continues with the local Health Authority to run the Bookstart initiative in Runnymede. This provides for every child born a Bookstart pack distributed by the clinics to parents and carers at the eight months hearing check. The packs include books and material to encourage word play, using books with babies, and information on library membership.

3.8 Libraries are good contact points for providing advice to the public by a variety of agencies. Pensions advice and other surgeries, Member's surgeries and the use of libraries for local meetings is developing.

3.9 Friends Groups have been very successful in raising the profile of their libraries in the local community and their support is greatly appreciated. The Friends of Virginia Water library have arranged an interesting series of evening talks at the library and also promoted the library at "Carnival Capers" the village fair. They hold regular coffee mornings at the library. The Friends Group at Addlestone library have been very supportive in helping with and providing prizes for children's activities. A new Friends Group has recently been started at Chertsey in partnership with the W.I.

3.10 By the autumn of 2003 15 libraries in Surrey 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. One of the libraries is Staines. 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. It is hoped to extend this to further libraries.

3.12 These initiatives aim to bring reading and learning opportunities to children parents and carers a 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 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 Runnymede 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 in comparison.

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 *Appendix 2* lists the current timetable of stops for Runnymede 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.

