

Item 7

The Library service in Surrey Heath

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SURREY HEATH

28th October 2004

KEY ISSUE:

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

SUMMARY:

This report shows the current context to library services in Surrey Heath. 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 notes the range of service developments in libraries in response to "Framework for the Future"
- (ii) That the overall direction of developments in libraries in Surrey Heath meets their aims for libraries.

BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN SURREY HEATH

1. Library services in Surrey are provided through a network of 52 libraries and six mobile libraries. Surrey Heath is served by four static libraries, and three 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.
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.
3. Of the four static libraries serving Surrey Heath, Camberley is a Band 1 Library, Frimley Green a band 4 library, and Bagshot and Lightwater are Band 5 libraries.

PERFORMANCE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN SURREY HEATH

4. Appendix 1 shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Surrey Heath for 2003/04 and for 2002/03 compared with the average for those in the same band.

5. Numbers of issues have fallen in all libraries in line with trends across the County but 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.

Surrey Community Survey (2003).

6. 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

7. 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

8. 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%	

9. 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
10. Within this national strategic framework, the Library Service in Surrey Heath has made a local response to each of these themes.

BOOKS, READING AND LEARNING

11. Across Surrey Heath, 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.
12. Book promotions increasingly take 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 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. Small promotions of current fiction books known as “Read” operate at Bagshot, Frimley Green and Lightwater. All Surrey Heath 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. Elizabeth Noble the author visited Camberley and Frimley Green libraries to talk about her writing. The Camberley reading group is one of only two in the UK to be taking part in a Reading Partners initiative working with the publisher Times Warner.
13. Reading groups for adults and a Children’s reading Club are held at Frimley Green, and Camberley has a morning and an evening reading group.
14. Activities to promote children’s reading are also held at all four libraries along with craft sessions.
15. 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. 770 packs were distributed in Surrey Heath 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.
16. Story times for children are held at libraries in Surrey Heath, either at Camberley and Frimley Green, as separate events or part of school visits.
17. The annual summer reading scheme for children has been consistently successful and last year, 945 children participated in “The Reading Maze” at the libraries in Surrey Heath. Figures on this year’s scheme the “Reading Rollercoaster” will not be available until later in the year but are likely to show an increased take up on last year.

18. 342 children participated in the scheme at Frimley Green and 99 children joined the library to take part in the scheme, with 130 joining in at Lightwater. Library Managers visited local schools to promote the scheme. 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.
19. Libraries in Surrey Heath 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 Cordwalles and Woodlands,
20. 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 Surrey Heath range from 2 at Bagshot to 16 at Camberley where more terminals will shortly be added in a small extension funded by Library Service development funds. 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.
21. Libraries in Surrey Heath 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. Adult and Community Learning have been providing learning at Camberley and there have been weekly sessions of careers advice in the library.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

22. The People's Network terminals provide access to ICT services in all libraries in Surrey Heath. A popular use of this is to produce a CV and e-mail it to a prospective employer.
23. Camberley library has 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. The service was launched county wide at Camberley library on 16th September by Sophie Countess of Wessex.
24. 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.
25. 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.

COMMUNITY AND CIVIC VALUES

26. 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.
27. A service agreement with the WRVS provides a library service to housebound people, delivered by volunteers. Currently there are 12 volunteers and 20 readers.
28. 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. The Standing Citizen's Panel for Surrey Heath was also consulted on this issue. 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 Surrey Heath were maintained. In addition, a new stop will be provided weekly at Deepcut outside the new village hall accessible both to Army families and the new housing complex. There will also be a new stop at St Michael's Camberley every Tuesday afternoon. Timetable changes will take place in January 2005.
29. Surrey Heath Local Committee provided funds to make improvements to Camberley including new computer desks, and audiovisual equipment. Bagshot library underwent a refurbishment partly funded by the Surrey Heath Local Committee and partly by the Friends of Camberley library and the Area budget in November 2003 which resulted in increased membership and borrowing.
30. The Friends of Frimley Green library and Camberley library have also been very supportive, and the Lightwater Library Association continues to provide and support the Lightwater library building. The Friends of Frimley Green library run coffee mornings every week, played a major role in running the library summer fete and have also bought new equipment and contributed to the new carpet in the public area. A Local Community Grant provided new arm chairs and a coffee table.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO DELIVER TRANSFORMATION

31. 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.
32. 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.
33. 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.

34. 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.

CONSULTATIONS

35. Consultation with Members, the Standing Citizen's Panel for Surrey Heath and public on mobile library changes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

36. No major or new financial implications

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

37. Retention and development of mobile and local libraries reduces the need to travel and helps sustain community life.

CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

38. None

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PERFORMANCE OF THE SERVICE IN SURREY HEATH

The table below shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Surrey Heath 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
Camberley	47.5	352757	232377	560	148.3	97.7	629.9	415
Average Band 1	49.5	411126	435681	1000.74	166.5	176.4	410.8	435.4
Frimley Green	24.5	77510	62135	179	62.7	50.2	433	347.1
Average Band 4	28	74485	66549	188.4	52.5	46.9	394.6	352.6
Lightwater	12.5	29858	17389	65	46.9	27.3	459.4	267.5
Average Band 5	21.8	35343	35016	122.55	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7
Bagshot	15	14323	9608	58	19.2	12.9	246.9	165.7
Average Band 5	21.8	35343	35016	122.55	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7
*** 2002 – 2003								
Camberley	47.50	381009	242858	560	154	98	680	434
Average Band 1	49.50	424162	399459	1000	165	155	455	406
Frimley Green	24.50	85188	67684	179	66	53	473	378
Average Band 4	28	81153	65485	188	59	48	476	44
Lightwater	12.5	33170	19096	65	51	29	510	294
Average Band 5	22	42620	37737	122	37	30	373	313
Bagshot	15	17468	9920	58	22	12	301	171
Average Band 5	22	42620	37737	122	37	30	373	313

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

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