



The Library Service in Tandridge

23rd March 2007

KEY ISSUES

To report on recent progress and improvement in Surrey County Council libraries in Tandridge, and to note current issues and future developments for the Library Service in Surrey and their impact.

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the Library service in Surrey and a progress report on the services provided in Tandridge. The report looks forward to future challenges, describes how the service is planning to respond constructively to change, and highlights future opportunities to develop libraries.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the current state of provision of static and mobile libraries in Tandridge and the range of services provided in them
- (ii) note the opportunities for the service to develop in Tandridge to meet the needs of its residents in future, and continue to promote the interests of libraries in plans for joint development of local services.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Surrey County Council Libraries – a brief overview

1.1.1 Within the new structure of Surrey County Council, Libraries form part of the Libraries & Culture Service, in the Services for Communities Directorate.

1.1.2 This is a time of change for Libraries; there is a need to respond to the challenges of new services, changing lifestyles, and changing patterns of use.

1.1.3 Book borrowing is falling nationally. Visits to libraries were holding steady, but this year they have begun to fall, though at a lower rate. Use of public access PCs connected to the Internet is now a considerable draw, reflecting the shift in information provision in some areas from print to electronic format.

1.1.4 Books and reading as a creative use of leisure is still very important in people's lives, and promoting books and reading is a priority for libraries.

1.1.5 The Libraries & Culture Service Business Plan for 2007/8 and the following two years seeks to respond positively to these changes and enable libraries to continue to be relevant to people's lives.

1.1.6 The priority for Libraries is the use of resources to make the most of the available budget:

- A capital programme of library refurbishments to contemporary design standards is under way. **Oxted Library** will benefit from refurbishment in 2007.
- We are developing a Network Strategy for the next ten years, to enable a constructive response to local development opportunities, including plans for regeneration and Town Centre redevelopment.
- Procurement: new library resource supplier contracts for 2007 provide greater efficiency and more books.
- We are introducing 'self-service' new technology in libraries, so that borrowers can check in and out their own books.
- We are reviewing library staff levels and roles in the light of changing library services and use, seeking to increase efficiency, standardise opening hours, and improve personal service to the public.
- We are extending use of online services to enable library members to manage their borrower accounts online and make use of a range of high quality library and information services from home, workplace or school/college. **Caterham Valley Library** has piloted an initiative in 2005/6 to develop the local library as a contact point for online Surrey County Council information and services.

2 ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

2.1 Major development themes in Libraries and their impact in Tandridge

2.1.1 Modernisation programme

The introduction of 'Self-service' new technology for users: improvements to library automation mean that users can now check in and out their own loans, and book their own sessions on public access computers. Staff are still on hand to assist less confident users.

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- Self-service technology for users was piloted in Redhill Library in November 2005. The same Self-service technology is to be introduced in **Oxted Library** in 2007.

2.1.2 Library refurbishments:

- A substantial capital programme has been in progress since 2005. Library interiors are being upgraded to contemporary design standards, drawing on the retail experience with which libraries are now increasingly in competition.
- Capital funding of £500k was allocated in January 2006 to improving libraries across Surrey. The Countywide programme for 2007 has the priority of introducing Self-service technology into 11 of the larger libraries in Surrey during 2007.
- Scheduled for June 2007 is the refurbishment of **Oxted Library**. The library will be given a new look and feel, and will benefit from the improvements in personal service and efficiency that new self-service technology will bring.

2.2 **Access to Library services In Tandridge**

- Residents of Tandridge have access to Library services through five static libraries at **Caterham Hill, Caterham Valley, Lingfield, Oxted and Warlingham**, and through the Mobile Library service.
- Since August 2006, all library phone calls have been routed through the Surrey County Council contact centre.

2.2.1 **Libraries in Tandridge**

2.2.1.1 **Caterham Hill**

Caterham Hill Library is a popular and well-regarded community library. This Library has been used for wider community benefit, as a 'surgery' base for community police officers, and as a polling station. Recently, agreement has been reached with Caterham-on-the-Hill Parish Council for its meetings to be held there. This library is piloting a new approach to hiring library premises in suitable circumstances (see section 2.3 for more details).

2.2.1.2 **Caterham Valley**

Caterham Valley Library is lively, and well-used, successful in its activities for children. It houses the North Tandridge Local History Centre, run in partnership with the Bourne Society. In 2005/6, it piloted an initiative under the slogan '*You'll be amazed*' to promote the Library as the location to find out about Surrey County Council and its services. The pilot included surgery sessions with the local County Councillor, and with Surrey County Council services. The Registration service is co-located with the Library, giving the opportunity for cross-service co-operation within Libraries & Culture.

2.2.1.3 **Lingfield**

Lingfield Library is a unique, hidden treasure. It is housed in The Guest House, a Grade II* listed building bequeathed to Surrey County Council by Arthur Baldwin Hayward in 1954. Since then, it has fulfilled the dual role of lively local library and significant historic monument. These roles converge in the Hayward Memorial Local History Centre, based in the Library, managed in partnership with Surrey CC Libraries & Culture and local organisations specialising in local and family history. In December 2005 a dendrochronological survey of the building was made, which has produced an accurate building date of 1474. This information will enable further research into the building and its historical significance. The building is maintained to a high standard appropriate to its listed status through a trust fund, part of the Hayward bequest. An Advisory

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Committee, chaired by County Councillor Ken Rimington, advises Surrey County Council on the care of the building and the management of the trust fund investments.

2.2.1.4 Oxted

Oxted Library has continued to function normally while very major building works have been taking place to remodel completely the Health Centre that forms part of the building. The work is now completed, and this is a good opportunity to pay tribute to the Library Manager and staff, and to the users of the Library, for the co-operative and good-humoured way in which they dealt with the considerable disruption caused by the project. In June 2007, **Oxted Library** will close for refurbishment and installation of self-service new technology. When it reopens, the Library will be transformed, with the counter removed, more display and circulation space, and the benefits of self-service, which include less queuing, greater opportunities for staff to give personal service to users, and a more attractive environment, more conducive to encouraging borrowing and reading.

2.2.1.5 Warlingham

Warlingham Library is the first purpose built library in Surrey, opened in 1954. Despite its position, somewhat apart from the village centre, it attracts good use for its size, and has good relationships with local schools. The library staff ensure that the Library features in community publications and activities.

2.2.2 Performance data for Libraries in Tandridge.2005/6 (latest available year)

Library	Band/hours open per week	Annual Issues	Annual Visits	Issues per hour	Visits per hour	Floor space sq. m.
Oxted	2 / 38.5hrs	143,989	117,527	72.0	58.8	376.8
<i>Avg. band 2</i>	<i>41.2 hrs</i>	<i>185,215</i>	<i>162,689</i>	<i>90.0</i>	<i>79.0</i>	<i>468.99</i>
Caterham Valley	3 / 35hrs	105,472	66,889	58.1	36.9	443.5
<i>Avg. band 3</i>	<i>36.7 hrs</i>	<i>108,578</i>	<i>83,102</i>	<i>57.7</i>	<i>44.2</i>	<i>286.65</i>
Caterham Hill	5 / 26	47,540	68,063	35.4	50.6	158.6
Lingfield	5 / 20.5	16,530	18,080	15.5	17.0	76.1
Warlingham	5 / 25.5	31,600	29,980	23.9	22.7	110.6
<i>Avg. band 5</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>33,922</i>	<i>36,219</i>	<i>29.8</i>	<i>31.8</i>	<i>122.56</i>

Points to note:

- Libraries in Surrey are divided into 5 bands, according to size, scope and level of business. Within those bands there are variations in use that are accounted for by size, opening hours, number of public terminals available.
- Some libraries attract more library visits, proportionally, than others. This may be because of their location close to shops, workplaces and public transport that make them a magnet for quick visits.
- The trend is for library users to visit frequently, but borrow less. Some library visitors come for some purpose other than borrowing books, such as to use a public access PC, or to seek information.

2.3 The Mobile Library Service in Tandridge

2.3.1 The Mobile Library Service in Tandridge visits 14 village or similar isolated communities every week or fortnight, and 15 sheltered housing units every four

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weeks. The vehicle with its distinctive colourful pictorial livery on the exterior carries a choice of over 2,000 books and spoken-word cassette tapes. Those members of the community unable to access static libraries highly value the service. In the Public Library User Survey conducted in October 2006 the question "What do you think of this library?" was posed. 97.6% of those responding stated "Very good" or "Good".

2.3.2 The advice of members of the Local Committee has been instrumental in the recent introduction of stops at the Catlin Gardens development in Godstone, Nethern Court Road in Woldingham, and Maple Close in Whyteleafe.

2.3.3 The introduction of a visit to Felbridge Village Hall at the time when a local playgroup meets there has proved popular.

2.3.4 Mr Chris Phillips, the Area Manager with a countywide responsibility for mobile libraries, welcomes any further advice from members of the Local Committee as it is helpful in trying to ensure the Mobile Library Service meets the needs of the people of Tandridge and matches demand as effectively as possible to the available vehicle resources.

2.3.5 The timetables for the Mobile Library Service are now on the Surrey County Council website at www.surreycc.gov.uk/libraries. These live interactive pages provide the times of the mobile library visits in Surrey for the next three months as well as maps showing the location of each stop. The service is also publicised through posters at appropriate locations, Residents Association newsletters and parish magazines. In 2007 it is hoped to raise the profile of the service through local radio.

2.4 Performance of the Contact Centre

2.4.1 The roll out of library telephone calls to the contact centre began in August 2006 and was completed with Saturday opening in January 2007. A team of staff from the library service worked closely with a team from the contact centre to ensure the necessary protocols were in place and training was provided for all contact centre staff. The two services continue to work together to improve the service to the public.

2.4.2 The initial response from many library users was one of suspicion that the service would be worse; many generally disliked the idea of a contact centre. Many verbal and some written complaints were received from customers who had not actually used the service. Some library staff were also dubious of the benefits to their customers. A major concern was the lack of the personal touch.

2.4.3 The complaints from those who have used the service fall into two main categories, length of time waiting for the call to be answered, linked with the cost of the call and procedural mistakes made by staff members at the contact centre. Overall we have recorded 68 complaints and 70 comments about the change in service up to the end of January 2007. The two services liaised to address the issues raised in the complaints and by February 2007 the number of complaints had reduced significantly to less than one a week, mostly now being about the length of time before their call was answered.

2.4.4 The contact centre is now dealing with routine enquiries about renewals, requests, computer bookings and opening times, and are passing the more

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detailed enquiries through to the libraries and to Enquiries Direct. The staff in the libraries are very pleased with the outcome of the changes and are building good relationships with staff in the centre. A typical comment from a Library Manager in the last quarterly report was "Many comments this quarter regarding the Call Centre. However, things have settled down now. Calls seem to be being dealt with more efficiently and readers seem to be a lot happier!"

2.4.5 Library Service Calls 2006/07

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
NO OF CALLS	2581	10,984	13,033	11,144	13,486
% OF CC CALLS	8	47	29	33	27

2.5 Hire of Libraries: policy and charges

2.5.1 Currently, hire of a library is at the discretion of the manager, and highly dependent on the layout and content of the building and its suitability for use by the public. Charges have also been locally determined.

2.5.2 A review of the policy for hiring libraries is now under way, in conjunction with Surrey County Council Risk Management. The new approach has been piloted in Tandridge, with the hire of Caterham Hill Library to the Parish Council, and the hire of the meeting room at Lingfield Library to Dormansland Parish Council. There will be a consistent policy that harmonises hire of libraries with hire of schools. Rates will be revised, and published for all library buildings that are available to hire. Because of security and health and safety risks, lack of caretaking staff and the lack of flexibility of space, libraries are suitable for hire only in limited circumstances. Individual requests are subject to a risk assessment.

2.5.3 The county-wide policy for hire of libraries, and the scale of charges, will be introduced during the financial year 2007/8.

2.6 Volunteer involvement in library services in Tandridge.

2.6.1 The **Books on Wheels** service, taking books and other items to people who cannot leave their homes is delivered by volunteers in partnership with the WRVS. Any person who can no longer make the journey to the library owing to age or disability can use this service. Alternatively, a relative, neighbour or friend who visits the Library can be registered to borrow books for the person. There is a wide range of books and audio material to choose from, and Books on Wheels users have a free request service.

2.6.2 Volunteers to provide the service are always welcome. Anyone interested can contact the local library, and details will be passed to the WRVS. Appropriate checks are made and there is training and support for the volunteers.

2.6.3 **Local History Centres** are highly active in Lingfield and Caterham Valley Libraries. These Centres are managed in partnership by Surrey County Council Libraries and Heritage, and local and family organisations. Volunteers, trained and supported by Surrey County Council, use the resources of libraries' local

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collections to develop knowledge and resources about the locality, and deliver a quality enquiry service. The centres make a notable contribution in the areas of:

- Local research and sharing knowledge and memories
- Expert response to specific local history enquiries
- Fostering a sense of place, and encouraging new residents to take an interest in their new home
- Linking older and younger people together through work with schools

- 2.6.4 A wide ranging review of the use of volunteers across the whole of Surrey County Council Libraries & Culture service has begun. Surrey County Council is leading an all-encompassing Regional study of the potential use of volunteers in the Cultural sector. Working with Surrey County Council's Voluntary Sector Liaison Team, the Libraries & Culture service will produce a comprehensive report, which will be fed back to Members, with recommendations to develop policy in using volunteers across the service.

3 **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

Members are asked to take note of the contribution of Libraries in Tandridge to equalities and diversity:

- Libraries are open to all, free at point of use and neutral.
- Provision for minority ethnic communities is available through all libraries, with emphasis on excellent relationships with the Asian community at Redhill Library
- Children are entitled to library membership from birth, and the recent introduction of an under-5s library card, featuring the much loved children's story character Maisy, enables them to borrow books free of library fines.
- Services are available in different formats for those who require them, and mobile library and Books on Wheels services meet the needs of isolated communities and the housebound.

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