



## **The Library Service in Woking**

**13 November 2002**

### **KEY ISSUE:**

The Woking Local Committee has asked for a report on the Library Service in the area for 2001/2002 to be brought to their November 2002 meeting.

### **SUMMARY**

This report sets out the current context to library services in the Woking Area. It considers local issues and service developments.

### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Woking Committee should:

- i) Confirm the role of the library service in Woking in promoting self-reliance.
- ii) Confirm the range of service developments in Woking.

## 1. Background to the service in Woking

**1.1** Library service in Surrey is provided through a network of 52 libraries and six mobile libraries. Woking is served by 4 static libraries and one mobile library. 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** For the purpose of defining the level and scope of the services offered in each library, each of the 52 static library service points is allocated to one of five bands. The principle is the concentration of resources upwards in order to achieve the optimum use of resources. The banding policy influences the range of services provided in a particular library, but the network provides access to the whole range.

**1.3** Of the four static libraries serving Woking, Woking is a Band 1 Library or major town centre library, West Byfleet is a Band 4 library and Byfleet and Knaphill are Band 5 libraries. Budget availability determines library 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.

**1.4** The mobile library based at Chertsey serves small communities in Woking. Communities served include Sheerwater, Maybury, Old Woking, Mayford, West End, St. Johns, Horsell and Send. Visits are made every week or fortnight depending on the volume of use and a number of sheltered housing units are visited every four weeks. Another dedicated mobile library visits residential houses for elderly and disabled people across Surrey every three months to exchange deposit collections.

**1.5** 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.

**1.6** *Appendix 1* shows the range of services available to library users.

**1.7** *Appendix 2* shows a range of performance data for the static libraries in Woking compared with the average for other Surrey libraries in the same band.

## 2. Self reliance and local initiatives

**2.1** The library service has an important role to play in helping to promote self reliance in individuals and communities by promoting access to

literature, information, e-services and lifelong learning through the network of libraries and through community based delivery.

### **Access to literature**

**2.2** Across the borough a wider range of book displays and promotions took place, which aimed to actively promote reading, increase the use made of the stock and broaden reader's horizons. A "Thrillers and Chillers" promotion attracted wide interest and included an audience of over forty people to "The body in Woking Library" author event. Woking, Byfleet and West Byfleet libraries have started Reading Groups, which are proving popular. The Library Services web site has been developed to include more ideas on what to read and the opportunity for readers to share reviews.

**2.3** For children, visits by Val Biro at Woking and Simon Firth with his "Gripping Yarns" at Byfleet and West Byfleet gave many children and parents an opportunity to enjoy storytelling and poetry. Woking Library ran a "Winter Magic" short story competition with the Woking News and Mail which attracted over 125 entries. All four libraries welcomed and introduced large numbers of children to the library, provided story times, regular competitions and a successful summer reading scheme.

### **Information and lifelong learning**

**2.4** While Woking Library retains its role as the main reference and information provider for the Borough, access at all libraries to the internet and on-line information has increased the number of library users having information enquiries satisfied at their own libraries and to support this library staff have received information training. In addition, all library staff are continuing to receive information technology training from the New Opportunities Fund to help library users better and increase their skills for the wider range of IT facilities which will be available under the new libraries automation contract in February 2003. Woking Learning Centre continues to be well used, providing self-help learning with staff support, help with internet access and in partnership with Guildford College a range of taught courses are available in the library.

## **3. Social inclusion**

**3.1** A service agreement with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service ensures that a library service operates with volunteers to those who are housebound. Housebound Services Week took place in September 2001 to raise interest and thank volunteers.

**3.2** Friends Groups at Byfleet and West Byfleet have been very successful in raising the profile of their libraries in the local community and their support is greatly appreciated. Both groups

have helped library managers increase their communities use of the library by activities such as talks, clubs, rentals by local groups and activities for children.

**3.3** Ethnic communities in Woking are served in a variety of ways. In Woking library this includes Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Italian, Spanish and Latin American, Chinese and Vietnamese communities. Bookstock is provided in French, German, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Greek, Czech, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. Woking library belongs to CILLA, a UK library stock circulation for Indic stock. The library also has a range of audio-visual items including a range of World Cinema videos, compact discs including Bhangra titles and a small collection of cassettes. It is hoped to include some Indic language films on DVD.

**3.4** Currently a Chinese newspaper Sing Tao Daily and the Daily Jang are available at Woking library. Some Woking library staff have been sent on cultural awareness courses at the Maybury Centre and it is hoped to extend this in future.

#### **4. Library Service issues and their impact on Woking**

**4.1** Use of libraries is diversifying while nationally the traditional method of gauging library use – book issues – has been falling, although there is some evidence that reader development activities are reducing the decline. Across the county the Library Service continues to serve 300,000 active borrowers and issue 8 million items per year, over 837,000 of which are issued in Woking. In addition every year the library service answers 700,000 information enquiries and handles over 1 million internet episodes. Numbers of visits to the library at 6 million per year (over 853,000 in Woking) are holding up.

**4.2** There are a number of property issues in Woking. In particular, West Byfleet Library has suffered several attacks of vandalism. The search for a solution to provide a new library for Knaphill continues. Woking Library has suffered flood damage twice due to ingress of water from the cinema, to which a solution is being sought. Hearing loops have been fitted in all libraries, and automatic doors have been added to West Byfleet, but there are no automatic doors yet at Byfleet and Knaphill.

**4.3** The Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Surrey Libraries has assessed Surrey as having a good “two star” library service which is a very good assessment. The assessment also looks at prospects for improvement and the final assessment is awaited.

**4.4** As a result of the Audit Commission assessment the Library Service will be drawing up an Action Plan for further improvement, which is expected to include increased consultation and response to expressed

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needs, a more strategic approach to partnerships and better marketing of services

- 4.5** Libraries retain an important position at the heart of their communities. Their main challenge is to retain good quality services for current users while developing the service to meet the needs of the future.

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**Appendix 1****The service provided to library users**

<b>Learners:</b>	Support to individuals self-directed learning activities ICT facilities and space for learners Access to learning materials and courses including on-line and formal learning
<b>Readers:</b>	Books for loan and reference Periodicals Request services, internal and external Reader development activities and web resources Books in first languages Access to the library catalogue and self-service access in libraries and remotely via Internet
<b>Information seekers:</b>	Information resources, printed and electronic including Web-based, On-line and cd-rom at a range of levels Face to face, telephone, fax and e-mail enquiry service Local Community, Surrey County Council, Government and EU information Referrals – access to the wider information network, local and national. The library is an information gateway.
<b>Internet users:</b>	Access to the full range of Internet Services Support to Internet “novice” users
<b>Isolated users/communities:</b>	Residential homes services Mobile libraries to isolated communities Housebound services, agency and individual Outreach projects in targeted communities
<b>Disabled people:</b>	Remote access to library and information services Accessible buildings (some exceptions) RNIB Talking Book Services for the usually impaired Concessionary services Minicom / CCTV Alternative formats including access to request services Adaptive technology as part of CIT installations

<b>Ethnic groupings:</b>	Resources first languages – various formats Information resources in first languages
<b>Children and young people:</b>	Support for children as individual library users for their needs as children in education, and for their out-of-school leisure needs Resources in a range of formats – (books, CD-ROMs, games, on-line) User education via class visits in libraries and visits to schools Books and participation in planning other early years literacy projects. Development of remote access services for children (Children's web site) Reader development activities e.g. reading schemes and library activities Homework support
<b>Listeners and watchers:</b>	Audio visual resources in a range of formats:  VHS; DVD; CD-ROM
<b>Older people:</b>	Reminiscence material Residential homes service Mobile library service Housebound service Local history centres as an inter-generational resource
<b>Basic skills:</b>	Appropriate material
<b>Local history:</b>	Local History Centres networked to Surrey History Service Enquiry service Encouragement and support for local research and volunteer development
<b>Visitors to Surrey:</b>	Local information Tourist information Local history resources
<b>Cultural activities/services:</b>	Performing sets of plays and music Reader development activities – reading groups, author visits, book festivals, literature promotion Distribution of information in libraries on national, regional and local cultural activities

**Appendix 2****Performance of the Service in Woking**

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

<b>LIBRARY</b>	<b>HOURS OPEN PER WEEK</b>	<b>ISSUES 2001/2002</b>	<b>VISITS 2001/2002</b>	<b>PUBLIC FLOOR SPACE IN M<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>ISSUES PER HOUR OPEN</b>	<b>VISITS PER HOUR</b>	<b>ISSUES PER M<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>VISITS PER M<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>WOKING</b>	54	669372	694032	1509	238	247	752	460
<b>AVERAGE BAND 1</b>	49.50	424162	399459	1000	165	155	455	406
<b>WEST BYFLEET</b>	28.5	76540	72806	159	51	49	481	458
<b>AVERAGE BAND 4</b>	28	81153	65485	188	56	48	476	392
<b>BYFLEET</b>	21.5	44691	59705	191	46	53	657	313
<b>AVERAGE BAND 5</b>	22	42620	37737	122	37	30	373	313
<b>KNAPHILL</b>	19.5	46673	27161	62	46	26	423	438
<b>AVERAGE BAND 5</b>	22	42620	37737	122	37	30	373	313

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