SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

The Library Service in Woking

Local Committee for Woking
14 October 2004

KEY ISSUE:

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

SUMMARY:

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

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Local Committee for Woking should

   (i)   Note the range of service developments in Woking
   (ii)   Advise the Library Service on the future range of service
            developments in Woking in response to "Framework for the Future.

1. Background to the service in Woking

1.1.   Library services in Surrey are provided through a network of 52 libraries and six mobile libraries. Woking is served by four 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 four static libraries serving Woking, Woking is a Band 1 Library, West Byfleet is a Band 2 library and Byfleet and Knaphill are Band 5 libraries.

2. Performance of the library service in Woking

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

2.2.   Numbers of issues have fallen in all libraries but visits at Woking and Byfleet have risen. Also falling issues must be balanced by the increased number of electronic visits 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 effect physical use of the libraries. Work, however, continues to try to increase both the number of visitors and the number of issues.

2.3.   **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%

2.4.   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 Woking has made a local response to each of these themes.

3. Books, reading and learning

3.1.   Across Woking, 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. 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 many customers 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 Byfleet and West Byfleet. A major promotion of children's books "The Incredible Heap" was introduced to Woking in May. Woking also staged the highly acclaimed "Voices from Inside" poetry display from the inmates at Send prison.

3.2.   Woking library runs two reading groups and Byfleet and West Byfleet have active reading groups. Members of the Woking Reading Group attended the Reader's Day run by the library service at the Runnymede centre in May.

3.3.   The Friends of West Byfleet library were successful in obtaining funds from the Local Committee to make improvements to book displays in the library and seating for literary events, talks and author visits which the Friends support and help organise. The Friends of Byfleet library have also been very supportive, helping with events such as adult and child craft days, working with the Scouts to deliver leaflets to promote the library and other activities aimed at increasing the use of the library by the community.

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. 1770 packs were distributed in Woking 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.

3.4.   Story times are held regularly at libraries in Woking either regularly , as separate events or part of school visits.

3.5.   The annual summer reading scheme for children has been consistently successful and last year over 700 children participated in "The Reading Maze" at the libraries in Woking. 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. 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.

3.6.   Libraries in Woking 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 Winston Churchill, Park School and Maybury School to Woking, and St Johns to Knaphill. Library staff also visit local schools to promote the library, including West Byfleet to the Marist School and Byfleet to Manor County School.

3.7.   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 Woking range from 2 at Knaphill to forty at Woking. 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.

3.8.   Libraries in Woking 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 will be supporting the first informal steps towards ICT learning running BBC Webwise taster events. At Woking an "In Touch" IAG advisor is in the library weekly.

4. Digital citizenship

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

4.2.   Woking 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.

4.3.   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.

4.4.   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 Xrefplus are now available through the library website to all library members.

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 the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) ensures a library service to housebound people, delivered by volunteers. The service operates from all libraries in Woking

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 Woking were maintained and capacity has been found to plan additional services.

5.4.   Following comments from the public on the loss of service at Goldsworth Park due to Bank Holiday Mondays, from 6 January 2005, as well as providing a stop on Monday afternoon, a stop will also be provided at Goldsworth Park on Thursday mornings.

5.5   Also from Monday 10 January we will be introducing a weekly stop at Brooklands Tesco store for two hours on Monday afternoons.

6. Building capacity to deliver transformation

6.1.   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.

6.2.   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.

6.3.   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.

6.4   Knaphill Library
Following the decision by the Local Committee that officers pursue the option of taking a lease on shop premises in the Knaphill area, officers have identified potential premises and building survey work and a feasibility study has been completed. Officers are now looking in detail at the costings and feasibility of the premises with a view to making a recommendation to Members by the end of October whether to proceed further with negotiations for these premises or seek an alternative.

6.5.   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 seeking a commercial partner for the management of the library portfolio of buildings.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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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

**** **2003 – 2004**								
Library	Hours Open Per Week	Issues 2003/04	Visits 2003/04	Public Floor Space In Square Metres	Issues Per Hour	Visits Per Hour	Issues Per Square Metre	Visits Per Square Metre
Woking	54	628,750	719,874	1509	231.8	265.4	416.7	477.1
Average Band 1	49.5	411,126	435,681	1000.74	166.5	176.4	410.8	435.4
West Byfleet	28.5	67,340	69,759	159	46.6	48.2	423.5	438.7
Average Band 4	28	74,485	66,549	188.74	52.5	46.9	394.6	352.6
Byfleet	19.5	37,888	57,239	191	38	57.5	198.4	299.7
Average Band 5	21.8	35,343	35,016	122.55	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7
Knaphill	19.5	37,090	25,486	62	37.1	23.8	598.2	383.9
Average Band 5	21.8	35,343	35,016	122.55	32.7	32.4	288.4	285.7
***** **2002 – 2003**								
Woking	54	650,480	711,728	1509	231.7	253.5	431.1	471.7
Average Band 1	49.5	437,910	437,868	1000	170.1	170.1	437.6	437.5
West Byfleet	28.5	71,469	70,726	159	48.2	47.7	449.5	444.8
Average Band 4	28	74,256	63,004	188.74	51	43.3	393.4	333.8
Byfleet	19.5	42.030	55,254	191	41.4	54.8	220.1	290.7
Average Band 5	21.5	38,483	39,383	122.56	34.4	35.2	314	321.4
Knaphill	19.5	43,768	40,136	62	43.2	39.6	705.9	647.4
Average Band 5	21.5	38,483	39,383	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**