

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: 9 APRIL 2014

LEAD OFFICER: PETER MILTON, HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: OPENING HOURS AT SURREY'S PERFORMING ARTS LIBRARY



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

The Surrey Performing Arts Library brings together music, dance, theatre and cinema, and houses a wealth of materials suitable for schools, amateurs and professionals, plus thousands of vocal, orchestral and play sets for browsing and loan.

The Performing Arts Library is currently open for 27.5 hours per week, over 4 days. Following analysis of visit patterns and consultation with staff, the Library Service is proposing to improve and extend the opening hours to 33.5 per week over 5 days. This can be achieved within existing staffing levels, and therefore with no additional cost to the county council.

The proposals have been endorsed by customers and the general public through public consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the opening hours of the Performing Arts Library be extended from 27.5 hours per week to 33.5 hours per week as set out in paragraph 13 of the report.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

These proposals form part of a longer-term change programme within the Performing Arts Library, to increase efficiency and capitalise on income-generation opportunities.

The revised opening hours will offer improved value for money for Surrey residents, as they will provide greater access to the library at no additional cost to the county council.

The proposals will improve the library's efficiency, as staff will spend a greater proportion of their working week being available to serve customers, and able to offer a programme of events and activities.

DETAILS:

Surrey's Performing Arts Library

1. Located in the visitor centre of Denbies Wine Estate, but serving the whole of Surrey and beyond, Surrey's Performing Arts Library (PAL) brings together major collections of materials covering music, drama, dance, and film.

2. The library has received national recognition, having twice been awarded an Excellence Award for Music Libraries from the International Association of Music Libraries UK and Ireland (IAML).
3. Furthermore, the library has a long-term, loyal and highly satisfied customer base¹, and is able to recoup over a third of its running costs through income generation², with income rising steadily over the past few years.

Current opening hours

4. The Performing Arts Library is currently open for 27.5 hours per week, in the following pattern:

Monday: Closed
 Tuesday: 10am – 5pm
 Wednesday: Closed
 Thursday: 10am – 8pm
 Friday: 10am – 5pm
 Saturday: 9.30-1pm
 Sunday: Closed

5. The majority of staff who work at the library are employed on a full-time basis, and they currently make use of the library's closed hours to work on stock ordering and management, financial administration and preparing and dispatching customer orders.
6. It is worth noting that visiting the library represents just one way of using the library, as customers are also able to make enquiries and place orders via email, via an online enquiry form, or by telephone. In addition, orders can be collected from, and returned to, any library branch in Surrey or West Sussex³ on request.

Current use

7. The Public Library User Survey (PLUS) in 2009 indicated slightly below average levels of satisfaction with opening hours at the Performing Arts Library, when compared against the average of all libraries surveyed that year⁴.
8. Analysis of visit statistics⁵ and staff experience has shown that:
 - The majority of visits occur in the morning and early afternoon;
 - The current opening hours are not overly clear and consistent, and can be hard for customers to remember.
 - The final 2 hours between 6pm and 8pm on a Thursday evening are the least used of the library's current opening hours. This reflects footfall at

¹ Sources: Public Library User Survey 2009 and opening hours consultation results 2014.

² Income accounted for 37% of the total cost of running the library in 2012/13.

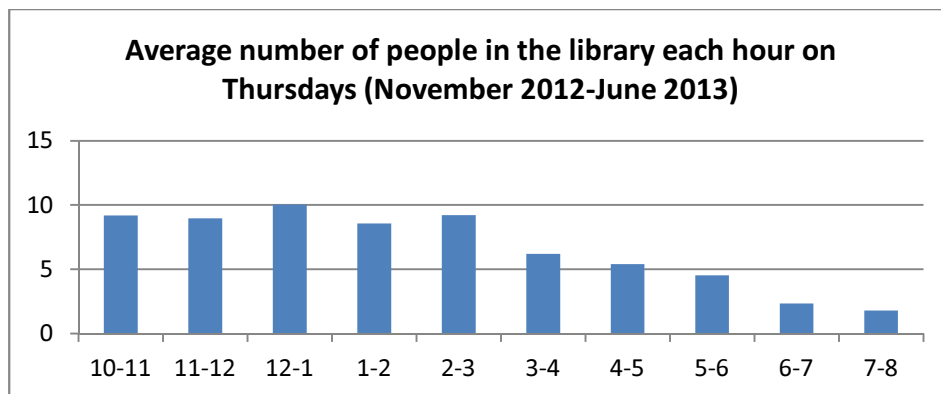
³ Courtesy of a Service Level Agreement with West Sussex County Council.

⁴ 71% of respondents rated opening hours as 'good' or 'very good', compared to average results for all participating libraries of 87%.

⁵ PLESCON data November 2012 – June 2013

branch libraries throughout the county where there is a decline in use during evening opening times, which are defined as post 5pm. The lack of lighting around the Denbies site during the evening, and the more remote location away from main commuting routes, further contributes to evenings being a less attractive time to visit.

Chart One



Proposals

- 9. The Library Service intends to remove the 7pm – 8pm Thursday opening, due to low levels of use.
- 10. In addition, the Library Service has invited customers and the general public to say:
 - a. Whether they support the proposals to open over 5 days instead of 4, in the pattern detailed and;
 - b. Whether a weekly later Thursday opening post-5pm is required.
- 11. The consultation results show broad support for the proposal to extend opening hours over 5 days instead of 4. It also showed that for specific customer groups, a later opening is important.⁶
- 12. As a result of this public consultation, the Library Service proposes to continue to offer a later opening until 7pm on a Thursday at the Performing Arts Library. Officers will review performance after 12 months.
- 13. Under these proposals, the Performing Arts Library will be open as follows:
 - Monday – Closed
 - Tuesday: 10am – 5pm
 - Wednesday: 10am – 5pm
 - Thursday: 10am – 7pm
 - Friday: 10am – 5pm
 - Saturday: 9.30am – 1pm

⁶ The consultation results are detailed in the section titled ‘Consultation’ below, and in the Consultation Report at Annex 1.

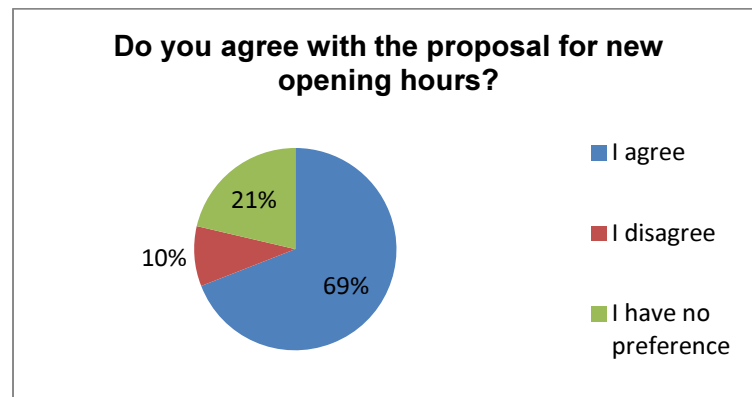
Total: 33.5 hours

Alternative options:

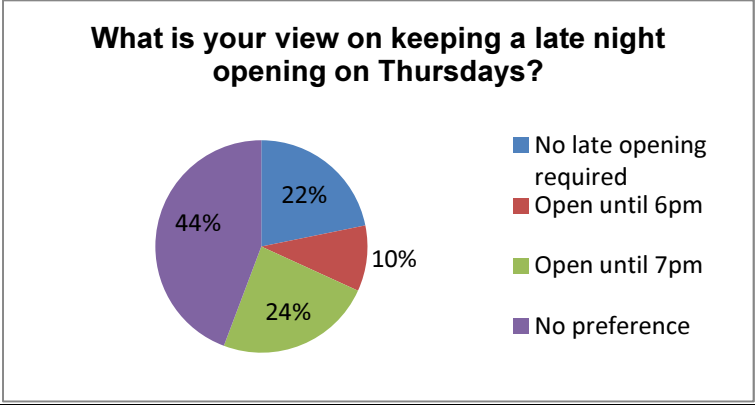
14. Officers have considered offering extended Saturday opening hours. A longer Saturday opening is desirable, and this is reflected in feedback from customer consultation. However, Saturday Enhanced Pay (SEP) rates would see this option incur extra cost. In addition, visits data shows that the number of visits declines during the last hour on a Saturday, which could indicate the level of demand does not justify the cost.

CONSULTATION:

15. Officers have consulted with managers and staff at the Performing Arts Library, who are enthusiastic about being able to offer an improved service under these proposals.
16. Customers and potential customers as well as the general public have been invited to comment on these proposals through both an online and in-branch questionnaire. A total of 361 responses have been received. The results are detailed in full in the accompanying consultation report in Annex 1.
17. The consultation results indicate high levels of support for the proposals with 69% of respondents overall supporting the proposal to increase opening hours over 5 days per week. See chart below:



18. On whether or not to maintain a later opening on Thursday evenings, the most common response was 'no preference'. Of those who indicated a preference, the results were marginally in favour of a 7pm opening over no late opening being required. 10% of respondents favoured a later opening until 6pm, and this therefore gives a total of 34% of respondents who would like to see some form of later opening once a week.



19. Equality analysis suggests that the narrow split between those respondents who require no late opening, compared to those who would like the library to stay open until 7pm, is largely related to different requirements within different age bands, and across genders. Older respondents were less likely to require an evening opening than younger adults aged 18-29 and then 30-49, with some specific comments received about the ability of those working full-time in a traditional pattern to access the library if the later opening was lost completely.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

20. The Library Service intends to maintain the current staffing levels, in order to deliver these extended opening hours.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

21. There is no additional cost to the county council arising from this proposal, as the extra opening hours will be delivered through existing staffing levels.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

22. The Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) confirms that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered / addressed. The additional hours will be delivered within existing staff levels at no additional cost.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

23. Decisions relating to the opening hours of local libraries are delegated to Local Committees where the changes are an increase or decrease of more than 15%. As this library is a County-wide resource the Leader has delegated this particular decision to the Cabinet Member for Community Services to make. The Local Committee Chairmen have been consulted and support this approach. There are no statutory requirements regarding the opening hours for the Performing Arts Library, but the decision needs to be a reasonable one taking into account the needs of people likely to be accessing it and in particular the results of the consultation.

Equalities and Diversity

24. When making this decision, there is a duty under s149 Equalities Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics and foster good relations with these groups. An equality impact assessment has been carried out to enable this and is attached as Annex 2. The conclusions are summarised below.

<p>Information and engagement underpinning equalities analysis</p>	<p>Staff have all helped shape the proposals, and no equalities concerns raised during individual discussions with affected staff.</p> <p>Customers and the public have been consulted via an online and in branch survey, which was emailed out to all members who consented to receive marketing information.</p>
<p>Key impacts (positive and/or negative) on people with protected characteristics</p>	<p>According to the results of the consultation, and staff experience, opening over 5 days per week instead of 4 will be of most benefit to older people who are retired / not in full time employment.</p> <p>In the consultation, people aged 50 and over were more likely than younger adults to suggest no evening opening required, but also had a large proportion indicating 'no preference'. According to the results of the consultation, maintaining a later opening is more important for males and younger adults aged up to 49, as well as those who have never married or formed a civil partnership.</p> <p>The Disability Network and Alliance, and the council's External Equalities Advisory Group were invited to respond to the survey but did not submit a formal response, though members may have responded anonymously on an individual basis.</p> <p>We do not have enough results from people of non-white ethnicity to draw conclusions about whether they support the proposals, and it suggests that the library's customer profile sees people of non-white ethnicity underrepresented.</p> <p>Young adults aged 18-29 were significantly underrepresented in the online survey results, but better represented in the branch's paper survey.</p>

<p>Changes you have made to the proposal as a result of the EIA</p>	<p>The public consultation has directly shaped the final proposal. The Library Service asked the public whether they required a later opening, and if so, whether that should be until 6pm or 7pm, or no preference. While the results indicated a high proportion of respondents had no preference, analysis of the results by equality strand has supported the view that younger adults in particular, require a later opening.</p>
<p>Key mitigating actions planned to address any outstanding negative impacts</p>	<p><u>1) Removing the 7-8pm Thursday evening could impact on those in full time education and/or work.</u></p> <p>a) Recommending maintaining a 7pm opening to reduce impact. Will review how this is going after 12 months.</p> <p><u>2) No change proposed within this consultation that would affect the Performing Arts Library's location. This means that the location remains harder to get to without a car. Likely impact continues to be principally on carers with limited time, people with certain disabilities, some older people and young people, without access to a car.</u></p> <p>a) Visiting the library in person is just one way of using the service: customers can phone or email, and items can be delivered to other branch libraries in Surrey/West Sussex. Work is underway to improve the publicity surrounding this benefit, and to improve the webpages.</p>
<p>Potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated</p>	<p>None identified</p>

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 25. If approved, the Performing Arts Library will launch the extended opening hours from May 2014, and will develop and implement a communications plan to ensure customers and potential customers are informed about this improvement to service.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

Local Committee Chairmen
 Performing Arts Library managers and staff
 Performing Arts Library customers
 Surrey residents and councillors

Annexes:

Annex 1 - Consultation report
 Annex 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Sources/background papers:

- Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964
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