



WOKING JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 24 SEPTEMBER 2014

LEAD OFFICER: ROSE WILSON, LIBRARY OPERATIONS MANAGER

SUBJECT: PROGRESS REPORT ON WOKING LIBRARY
REFURBISHMENT (2012) & BYFLEET COMMUNITY
PARTNERED LIBRARY

AREA: WOKING

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

This is a an update report on Woking Library following its major refurbishment in 2012 and the report to Woking Cabinet in March 2013, and Byfleet Library following its transfer to a Community Partnered Library in 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Woking Joint Committee is asked to note the report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The report is for information. .

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND – WOKING LIBRARY:

- 1.1 The library re-opened in 2012 following a major refurbishment and substantial investment from Woking Borough Council. A report to local committee in 2013 highlighted the positive customer feedback from the refurbishment and the increase in visitors and new members.
- 1.2 Woking Library, Surrey's largest and busiest library, was fully refurbished in partnership with Woking Borough Council and Moyallen, the Woking town centre developers, in 2012, as part of a major town regeneration project. The floor space increased from 1489sqm to 1616sqm and staff work areas were brought into public use. The library design and layout was undertaken by a small SCC library projects team in conjunction with FG Library products who also carried out the fit out.

2. ANALYSIS:

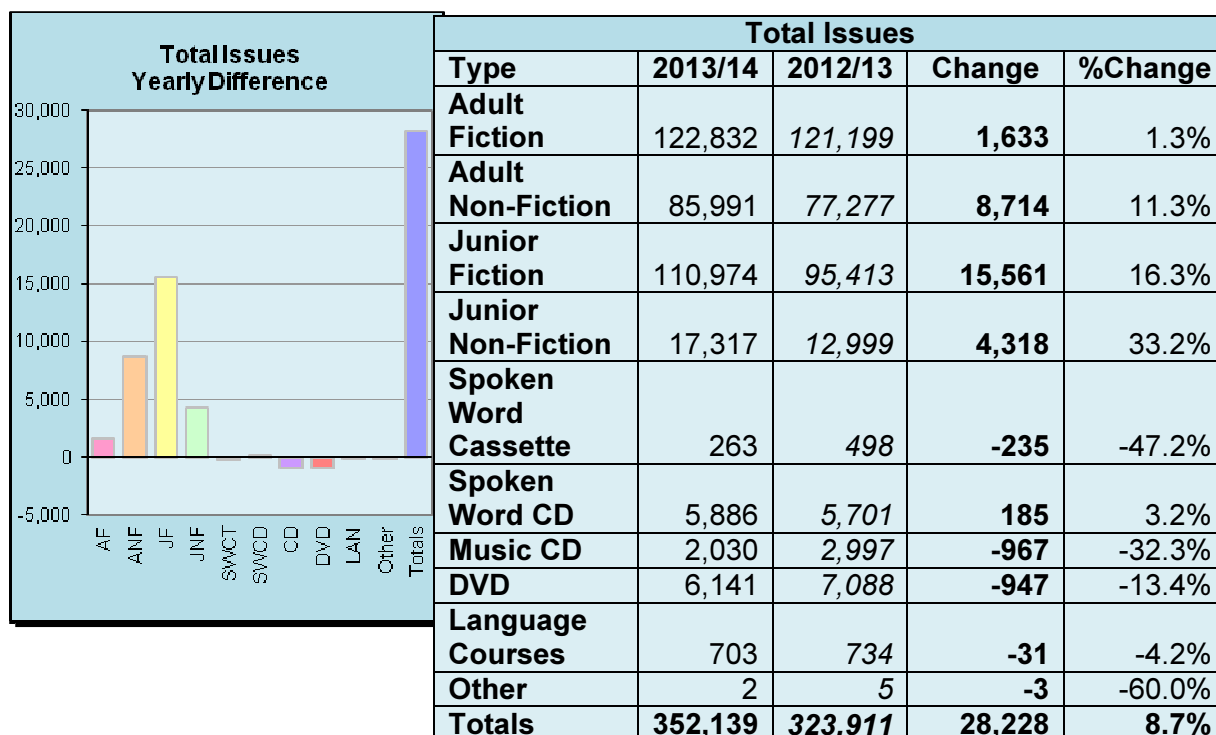
2.1 Re-design of Woking Library

- 2.1.1 Bright accent colours were used throughout the building to define key areas or zones, modern, bookshop style shelving was installed and high quality, stylish furniture purchased to create an exciting environment.
- 2.1.2 Particular attention was given to the children's library to make it an interactive and stimulating environment. The illuminated feature walls, bright colours, different types of seating and reading hideaways all added to the excitement and help foster a love of libraries and reading for life. All the furniture within the Children's Library is moveable so that staff can easily hold "Bounce & Rhyme" and Story time sessions.
- 2.1.3 With the introduction of Wi-Fi into Surrey libraries special laptop desks and chairs have been provided where customers can power up their laptops and use the wireless network for study or leisure purposes. One of the computer areas has been configured for teaching sessions and a meeting room has been created to be used by local groups. Moveable furniture and shelving also feature throughout and allows for the holding events for audiences of up to 170 people in the library – a great audience space in the town.
- 2.1.4 The library design team took a holistic approach to the project, based on their evaluation of previous successful refurbishments. In addition to refurbishing the fabric and layout of the building, they implemented a new way of working for the staff and trialled a new approach to the display of book stock. A reader-centred approach to the whole project was taken and there is greater emphasis on helping customers easily find what they are looking for and to discover interesting and new reads while browsing.
- 2.1.5 The project has been a great example of partnership working and has created a fabulous new flagship library that is a great asset to customers. A survey of users undertaken in 2013 showed that 94.4% of users rated the location of the library as very good and 90.6% rated the new layout as very good.

2.2 Customer use of Woking Library

- 2.2.1 There has been a 2.05% increase in the number of active borrowers at Woking Library for 2013/14 to 17,224.

2.2.2 Issue Results 2013-14 compared with 2012-13



2.2.3 Junior use has increased significantly over the period and continues to increase. In 2011, before the refurbishment, Junior Fiction issues were just under 80,000. They now stand at just under 111,000, a rise of 31,000. This strong performance has been maintained across all junior stock with a 16% increase in junior fiction issues and a 33% increase in junior non-fiction issues in the last financial year.

2.2.4 Rhymetimes are held on a weekly basis and continue to be extremely popular with over 60 plus children and parents attending each session.

2.2.5 The Summer Reading Scheme is again enormously popular.

2.3 Use of Library Stock

2.3.1 On re-opening, the library was resourced with 20,000 new books (7 tonnes) costing £200,000. Overall, borrowing has grown less strongly for adult book use, especially adult fiction. However, this is part of a national trend in library use, as people borrow less physical books, but use the library space and service in different ways – borrowing ebooks, studying, using a laptop or public internet computer, using our wide range of on-line resources, using the space to meet and network or attending one of the many events for children and adults that the library service hosts each year.

2.3.2 The trend in the UK for borrowing is declining sharply. Nationally, there has been an 8.6% drop in total library book issues for 2013-14 over 2011-12. Likewise the purchasing of books has declined on the high street with the value of books sold in the UK currently 3.1% down year on year.

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- 2.3.3 The adult fiction book issues have grown just 1.3% in the financial year 2013-14 and the adult non-fiction book issues have increased by a more impressive 11.3% on the previous financial year.
- 2.3.4 The newly refurbished library has helped Woking to buck the national trend of declining book borrowing and book buying. Woking has achieved an 8.7% increase in overall issues in the past financial year.

2.4 Audio Visual

- 2.4.1 Spoken Word, Music CDs, DVDs and Language Courses are equally subject to changes in consumer behaviour.
- 2.4.2 The user's switch from accessing spoken word on cassette to CD is almost complete, with the growth in Spoken Word CD loans almost off-setting the decline in Spoken Word Cassette loans for 2013-14. Investment in the library service's e-audio collection puts us in a good position to cater for the anticipated move to digital spoken word usage.
- 2.4.3 The migration to digital formats and streaming also account for the decline in DVD issues. That this decline has been limited to 13.4% year on year may be attributed to the library service being 'the last man standing' on the high street in the physical DVD rental market as commercial competitors such as Blockbuster cease trading.
- 2.4.4 Music has long been at the forefront of digital migration and in the face of sharply declining usage the service has now removed standing collections of music CDs from all but the Performing Arts library in Dorking.

2.5 Stock Approval Rating 2013-14 compared with 2012-13

- 2.5.1 The relevance of the stock to the customer, and therefore their approval rating, can be measured by the percentage of unused stock in each category.
- 2.5.2 Overall, approval ratings are far higher than at the start of the financial year as the percentage of unused stock falls. A far greater percentage of the stock is now judged as relevant by customers.
- 2.5.3 Of particular note are the approval ratings for DVD, up from 59.1% to 89.2%, for adult fiction, up from 85.2% to 98.1%, and young junior fiction, up from 73.3% to 98.4%.

2.6 IT use at Woking Library

- 2.6.1 There are 35 public PCs at Woking, the greatest number in any Surrey location.
- 2.6.2 Woking Public terminals were in use for 176,960 sessions in year ending March 2014. Utilisation varied between 55% and 64%, so, generally, there is always capacity for drop-in use.
- 2.6.3 In all, the PCs at Woking Library were in use for 3,083,909 minutes.

- 2.6.4 Wi-fi use for the year ending March 2014 was 41,992 sessions, making it the second highest take up in Surrey.

2.7 Users of Woking Library

- 2.7.1 In the first year of the operation in the new library 7,062 new borrowers were registered. In the second year, July 2013 to June 2014 the number fell to 6,387 new borrowers. The affect of library refurbishments on new borrower registrations tends to be temporary; they only maintain a higher level where the library has been in a poor location or is not large enough and there is an un-met demand. The figures increase in the first year but tend to fall away afterwards to a lower level.

2.8 Visitors

- 2.8.1 There has been a 6.4% drop in visitor figures since June 2012. This may be attributed to the increase in online renewal allocations as borrowers can now renew their borrowed items on line and these transactions are not attributed statistically to individual libraries. The loss of the front rotunda entrance may be another influencing factor. The new external library signs have now been installed in Gloucester Walk, which will hopefully increase visibility. Total visitors for July 2012-June 2013 were 390,296 and July 2013 to June 2014 365,122.

2.9 Borrower profile

- 2.9.1 The Male/Female split is consistently 43% male to 57% female for current borrowers (i.e. borrowers seen in the last two years and therefore with a current registration) and 39% male to 61% female for active borrowers (i.e. borrowers who have borrowed an item in the last year) across both 2013 and 2014 total figures. However there has been a significant change in the 15-19 age group as the male percentage split has gone up by 3.2% for current borrowers and 2.3% for active borrowers.
- 2.9.2 Looking at the difference in numbers of the two years, current borrowers have gone up overall by 1.4% and active borrowers have gone up overall by 2.1%.
- 2.9.3 The biggest percentage rise is in the 5-9 age band which is equal between Male and Female at around 16%, but again there is a significant change in the 15-19 age band as the number of males have gone up in both current (+7.7%) and active borrower figures (+7.3%) while the number of females have gone down.

2.10 Events at Woking Library

- 2.10.1 One of the aims of the refurbishment in 2012 was to create a more flexible layout which enables the library service to run a series of wide-ranging events.
- 2.10.2 Our author talks, where we can accommodate up to 170 people are extremely popular and provide a focus for cultural events in the town.
- 2.10.3 Our Health & Wellbeing events are also very popular and are a much valued service.

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2.10.4 The library strategy is to hold more cultural activities. Our recently launched World War One Commemoration will also see a number of events held in the library and in partnership with The Lightbox.

2.10.5 Events are varied as demonstrated by the brief examples below

2012

- **Just Dance Competition** on 7 Jul 2012
- **SRC Event – Cartoon Workshop** on 30 August
- **Jules Evans: Philosophy for Life** on 14 Nov 2012
- **Mark Billingham & Stav Sherez – Crime Writers in Conversation** on 17 Nov 2012

2013

- **Joanna Trollope – The Soldier's Wife** on 8 Feb 2013
- **Learning disability storytelling** on 10 Apr 2013
- **Relate – Information & Awareness** on 20 Apr 2013
- **Learning disability storytelling** on 10 Apr 2013
- **Damian Barr: An 80s Memoir Get it together** on 29 May 2013
- **Make a Noise in Libraries - SAVI & eReader Demo's** on 14 Jun 2013
- **Mini Big Read** – 25 Sep 2013
- **Comic Art Masterclass** – 28 Sep 2013
- **Domestic Abuse Info & Advice** – 16 Oct 2013
- **FLF – Family Photo Craft** – 19 Oct 2013
- **The Ramayana: A retelling with Daljit Nagra** – 23 Oct 2013
- **Professor Richard Ashcroft – Bioethics** – 6 Nov 2013

2014

- **The World Before the Great War with Charles Emmerson** – 17 Mar 2014
- **Dave Goulson** – 9 Apr 2014
- **World Book Night** – 23 Apr 2014 (*132 attendees*)
- **Dementia Awareness Week** – 23 May 2014
- **Jellytree Animation workshop** – 14 Jun 2014

3. BYFLEET COMMUNITY PARTNERED LIBRARY PROGRESS REPORT

- 3.1 Byfleet was the first community partnered library (CPL) to launch in September 2012. The volunteers, led by a volunteer steering group, have taken over the day to running and development of the library, while Surrey County Council continues to provide the library building and running costs, the stock, the I.T. and the guidance of a Community Partnered Libraries Support Team and a link library (Walton).
- 3.2 The library benefits from the support of a Friends group and a core group of 45 regular volunteers. Concerns that an early surge of interest and support would fade has not happened. Interest and commitment has been maintained and the volunteers have consistently met their responsibilities to provide access to services and meet the standards laid down.

- 3.3 A key benefit to the community delivered by the CPL has been a significant increase in weekly opening hours, including Thursday afternoon, an evening- Wednesday- and Sunday hours.
- 3.4 Rhymetimes are now run for two sessions per week instead of one and the volunteers have the flexibility to respond to local events such as opening for the cycle races and providing tea and coffee for spectators. They are now starting work on a programme to encourage more children to use the library and building contact with local residential homes. The numbers of children signing up to the Summer Reading Scheme has increased.
- 3.5 The steering group has had to face quite a challenge in building up use after a long decline. Since becoming a CPL, membership of the library has remained stable. Book issues are up currently by around 9%. Monthly visit figures fluctuate but are also up in 2014, with the last three months showing increases of 8%, 35% and 19%.
- 3.6 The volunteers report that they enjoy their volunteering and that it has helped many of them build confidence, learn new skills and make new contacts.
- 3.7 A survey of library users showed that they found the library well looked after welcoming and lively. A typical comment from the comments book kept in the library is “very friendly and helpful. We use the library for ourselves and the children, rhymetime, reading challenges, computers, borrow books, thank you for all the services and keeping it open, please let it continue”

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 A Woking Customer User Survey was carried out in 2013
- 4.2 A Byfleet library users survey was carried out in 2013

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 N/A as the report is for information.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT:

- 6.1 N/A as the report is for information.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 The volunteers who have taken over the running of the Byfleet Community Partnered Library, have not only enabled the library to remain in the community, but have enabled an increase in library opening hours for local people.

8. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Consultations with local disability user groups take place on a regular basis concerning services offered at Woking Library

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

9.1

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report
Human Resource/Training and Development	No significant implications arising from this report

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 10.1 The newly refurbished library has helped Woking to buck the national trend of declining book borrowing and book buying. Woking has achieved an impressive 8.7% increase in overall issues in the past financial year and customer approval ratings for stock have also improved significantly.
- 10.2 Libraries in Surrey are performing well when compared to the national percentage decline – Surrey has an overall drop of 1.2% compared with an 8.6% drop in national lending and a 3.1% drop in book buying. Set against this wider context the performance of Woking in the financial year 2013-14 is especially pleasing.
- 10.3 The new library has been very successful in attracting parents and children as the increase in junior book issues shows. The use of IT continues to rise and the introduction of wi-fi has proved to be very popular.
- 10.4 The events programme, using the new flexible library space, has been very popular and the service will continue to focus on providing stimulating, cultural activities for the community.
- 10.5 At Byfleet, the volunteers are successfully providing reliable and well regarded access to library services and beginning to develop their library for the benefit of the community. The library service will continue to work with the steering group and volunteers, support them and help them deliver their plans for this library. Improving use figures demonstrate that this model can be made to work and keep libraries open which were previously on the margins of sustainability.

11. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 11.1 The Library Service will supply an annual update on Woking and Byfleet libraries if the Joint Committee wishes.

Contact Officer:

John Case, Libraries Property Environment & Stock Manager
Tel 01276 27718 john.case@surreycc.gov.uk

Rose Wilson, Libraries Operations Manager
Tel 01932 794178 rose.wilson@surreycc.gov.uk

Consulted:

Peter Milton, Head of Cultural Services
Cllr Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Borough Portfolio Holder

NA

County Council Cabinet Member

Cllr Helyn Clack, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Sources/background papers: Surrey Library Visitor and Issue figures 2014

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