

**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(Guildford)**

**SURREY LIBRARIES
Update on Public Value Review
Implementation and services in libraries in
Guildford Borough**

28 NOVEMBER 2012

KEY ISSUE

This report provides an update on how the recommendations of the Libraries Public Value Review (PVR) have been implemented to date in relation to libraries at Guildford, Ash and Horsley and ongoing developments relevant to library services in Guildford Borough.

SUMMARY

The report describes how key recommendations of the PVR affecting public library services have been implemented including: replacement of the mobile library service with a range of alternative ways to access library services: increases in virtual library services: and increased marketing of libraries. It describes how work is ongoing on improving the choice of books, and reports on the performance of Guildford, Ash and Horsley libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to

(1) Note the progress in Guildford Borough libraries on implementing the recommendations of the Libraries PVR

(2) Note other library developments and initiatives which are taking place in libraries in Guildford Borough.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A Public Value Review of the library service was carried out between May 2010 and January 2011. The aim of a Public Value review (PVR) is to deliver improved outcomes and value for money for the residents of Surrey.
- 1.2 The Review identified a strategic vision for the library service, options for lowering costs and recommendations for developing the service for the future. The PVR vision for the service is “Libraries at the heart of local communities, connecting people to leisure and knowledge through an inspirational world class and innovative service open to all”
- 1.3 The review made over 30 recommendations for the medium and longer term and the implementations of them is monitored by a Member's Reference group and PVR steering board. Progress on the recommendations which have most impact on services in the Guildford area are covered in this report.
- 1.4 Recommendations to deliver in the short term included
- To work towards retaining a core branch network of libraries, supported by a network of libraries operated in partnership with local communities.
 - To cease operation of the mobile library service, offer and set up a range of alternative services for those who wish to use them
 - Increase the virtual library offer
 - Plan a marketing strategy
 - Improve stock performance

2. COMMUNITY PARTNERED LIBRARIES AND THE CORE STRATEGIC NETWORK

- 2.1 In December 2011 Cabinet agreed that ten libraries would form the Community Partnered network- Bagshot, Bramley, Byfleet, Ewell Court, Lingfield, New Haw, Stoneleigh, Tattenhams, Virginia Water, Warlingham.

Guildford, Ash and Horsley were to remain in the core strategic network of 42 libraries managed by Surrey County Council.

There were delays in the transfer of these libraries due to the Judicial Review, but they are now going forward. Byfleet and New Haw are now open, Tattenhams opens on 12 November with Virginia Water and Warlingham to follow in the New Year. The aim is to transfer all 10 by the end of March 2013.

3. THE MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

- 3.1 The mobile library service ceased as planned on 30 September 2011. In the run up to the closure, mobile library staff talked to users about their needs and encouraged members where they were able to join the main library service. In this period also, a questionnaire was sent to all registered mobile library members asking them if they wished to continue using library

services and to choose an alternative means of access. Across the County 3670 letters were sent out and 920 responses received. These were all followed up individually by library staff by telephone helping individuals with their options. At the end of this period 382 people within the 920 notified the service that they had found an alternative themselves and did not require special arrangements.

3.2 In Guildford Borough the requirements were

- 54 people requested a housebound service
- 29 people requested community transport
- 11 people requested to try the new e-reader and e-book service.

3.4. Housebound Services

Arrangements for the housebound service which deals with the most vulnerable library users is via the WRVS who have a paid contract with the library service. WRVS recruit and manage volunteers and match clients with volunteers. These volunteers then link with local libraries who provide the books and other materials needed.

To ensure the arrangements are working well for users the service has worked hard with the WRVS to improve the accuracy and efficiency of the data held and operations and we are now working across the county well within target for capacity which is 360 clients per annum. During this period WRVS itself underwent a restructuring and they now have a locality manager in place for Surrey providing support for the volunteers. There is now only an occasional short hiatus in some localities when volunteers stop or move away.

3.5 E-book services

The service researched the e-book market to find the best model. Readers who have chosen this service fall into two groups, those who are technically able to set up and download themselves, and those who require an intermediary to set up and deliver pre-loaded e-book readers. Two people in the Guildford area requested help. An e-book support volunteer who has been CRB checked and trained is now trialling the service with these users, and e-book readers on loan have been made available to the other nine. How this service is working will be evaluated in 2013.

3.6 Community transport options

Across the county, achieving the community transport options has proved complex due to the multiplicity of transport arrangements across the County. All ex-mobile users in the Guildford area who requested this option have been fitted into community transport runs.

3.7 In dealing with the closure of the mobile service, the library service undertook to deal with each person as an individual to best meet their needs, contacting them by phone, letter and email to refine their options and help them choose the best option for them and remains in contact .

3.8 Library Direct

Having made this transition, the service is moving forward on ensuring new people coming forward who can no longer access a static library receive a suitable service for their needs. This service will be promoted through

libraries and partners as "Library Direct". The service will be expanded to include new groups such as young carers and young people with disabilities. It is hoped advances in IT such as hand held web enabled devices will allow these users to have more choice in selecting their books over time.

3.9 Services to homes and sheltered housing

As part of the mobile services the residential homes service was also reviewed. Across the County a questionnaire was sent to residential homes followed by a further letter, asking if they wished to continue the book exchange service, or to look at other options such as reminiscence collections. 244 were sent out across the county and 77 finally responded.

Many homes across the county advised they had not been using the collections as residents needs had changed and they would either not wish to continue the service or have reminiscence materials instead. For the homes who said they still required a service, book collections have been kept in place and are being refreshed with newly purchased stock while reminiscence collections are put in place in others. The service plans to develop new volunteer roles to support reading groups within homes and help make active use of the reminiscence collections.

In Guildford the service is working with Dray Court and Charlton Court sheltered housing and has been meeting recently with Park Barn Day Centre discussing the use of reminiscence materials and the possibility for example of drop-in sessions on healthy living.

3.10 Community Links - Shere

With the changes in the mobile service and the development of volunteer run libraries there has been a possibility that some communities would come forward to talk to the library service about a local provision, run by the community and supported with books by the library service, which would provide a point of access into the library service network in that community. Within the library service this is a model known as a community link.

When the mobile library service was withdrawn from Shere, people in Shere expressed a desire to replace the service with a local provision and this was taken up by Councillor Keith Taylor. Shere Parish Council supported and developed the concept by refurbishing unused rooms at the back of the village hall, supported by the library service. The Shere Golden Jubilee library and meeting room opened on 2 October 2012. Users can borrow one of the books lent to Shere by Surrey, or can bring and exchange a book in the book exchange. If they want a particular title, it can be reserved from the library catalogue – Shere has a laptop and wi-fi for the purpose. The laptop can also be used to access the wide range of subscription databases of reference and other information supplied by Surrey, for choosing ebooks or more generally for accessing online Services. It is hoped this will be the first of a number of community links where local need meets the criteria for a community link and there is strong support from the local community to deliver it.

4. INCREASING THE VIRTUAL OFFER

- 4.1 Guildford, Ash and Horsley, along with all other Surrey libraries, have had their IT equipment refreshed as part of the libraries new IT contract. Savings had to be made as part of this contract and one way in which this was achieved, in line with changing trends was to introduce free wi-fi in all libraries and reduce the number of networked public and staff terminals. All libraries now offer free wi-fi and plug in points for lap tops.

To follow in the New Year is new library catalogue software called Arena which will offer a more Amazon-like experience, with book recommendations, ability to review and rate, forums and increased interactivity and personalization.

Online reference resources have been increased including Naxos music streaming, Mint Business Information and "Who else writes like?"

The new SCC IT management software will allow more use of social media and will make the experience of using the website more interactive with RSS feeds and polls.

To promote themselves and engage with people who use social media libraries are being encouraged to have Facebook and Twitter accounts. At the moment Guildford's Facebook account has 46"likes". On Twitter Ash has 49 followers, Horsley 39 and Guildford 621.

5. PLANNING A MARKETING STRATEGY

- 5.1 Following a range of staff workshops and discussions with SCC's Communications Team, a strategy has been developed which is concentrating on increasing the number of people using libraries and a marketing campaign has begun. Actions completed so far include: increased use of social media to promote libraries: creation of a new joining pack, given to all new members and used for promotion at external events: delivery of e-newsletters four times a year to members who have signed up for it, currently 80,000 adults and 24,000 parents and carers.
- 5.2 Free wi-fi and free books have been promoted via a poster campaign, with an ongoing initiative encouraging staff to promote specific services on a monthly basis called "The Big Push".
- 5.3 A major month long campaign to gain new members has been launched this November. In hard times this focuses on the free nature of the public library service and is aimed at the 25-44 group who are often under represented as library users. Campaign materials include artwork displayed on outdoor media such as trains railway stations and bus stops. Library staff will be distributing promotional materials at Horsley, Dorking and Woking stations. Eagle Radio will be doing radio commercials covering Woking, Ash Knaphill and Horsley.

6.IMPROVING STOCK PERFORMANCE

6.1 The PVR recommended the library service look for ways of improving the performance of library stock, both for cost effectiveness and increased customer satisfaction. This has meant looking at how new stock is selected and how stock is rotated and discarded to increase the number of issues achieved by each book in its lifespan.

6.2 The service has purchased a software product called "SmartSM" which is providing better data to manage stock selection and management. This is enabling the stock team to buy books more effectively in line with trends in use and makes better use of books in stock by identifying stock gaps and popular withdrawn titles and is improving the productivity of books by effective stock movement from library to library. It also provides data for library managers to carry out stock management and stock promotional activities on a reactive basis and in real time.

6.3 The second major project in improving the stock offer has been to rebalance the level and type of stock to the level of library, and what is popular there. A new three level stock offer (Main Town library, Town library and Community library) has been developed. Ash library will be one of the pilots for this offer, starting in January 2013. Ash will be one of three community libraries to pilot this stock offer. The aim is to provide a more current, dynamic range of stock that will be changed regularly. Library members will be asked for feedback, and all three pilots will be carefully evaluated.

7. GUILDFORD ASH AND HORSLEY LIBRARIES

7.1 Book issues at Ash have shown a steady increase of 12.5%. Horsley has increased by 11.8%. Guildford suffered a drop in issues in 2010-11 in part caused by major lift works. It has increased in 2011-12 by 4.77%.

Ash in 2011-12 issued 69,752 items, had 35,310 visits and 1028 new Members. Horsley had 62785 issues, 32,583 visits and 572 new members. Guildford had 287,164 visits, 260,916 issues and 5383 new members.

7.2 In the Summer Reading Scheme, Guildford had 949 children start the Scheme, the highest in the County. Ash did very well for a library of its size with 418 starters. Horsley was slightly down on previous years. Libraries were able to enlist the help of young volunteers with the scheme. 10 volunteers contributed 290 hours at Guildford, at Ash, 5 volunteers did 25 hours and at Horsley 6 volunteers did 50 hours.

Events at Guildford in the recent months have included dance events for the Cultural Olympics. An event was held outside the library with young Olympic leaders, to get the public to paint a large Olympic mural, which was attended by a number of Olympic stars and the press. The mural is now hanging in the library foyer.

On 23rd April, World Book Night, 30 authors attended an event and the library remained open until midnight. The library is currently giving space for NHS Health Checks to be held in the library. This has been a new opportunity for the service to work in a new way with the NHS. A series of story times for adults was held over lunchtime in March, with more planned for November. Attendances were from 20-30 people.

Ash held an author event with Nicholas Owen, Horsley have enrolled a Volunteer computer buddy to help library users with IT skills.

8. CONSULTATIONS

The library service has remained in contact with ex-mobile library users over their choices of alternative services and will continue to monitor how this is working for them. The public will be consulted on the new stock offer pilot in Ash as part of the evaluation process.

9.FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

On the transfer of all 10 libraries to community partnership the planned saving of £381,000 on the staffing budget will be achieved. The gross saving of £400,000 on the mobile service has been achieved, with £90,000 set aside for the funding and development of the alternative services.

10.SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

No sustainable development implications.

11.CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

No crime and disorder implications

12.EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Two equality impact assessments were carried out on the PVR recommendations and the service is keeping these under regular review.

13.CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The library service has made progress on the key recommendations of the PVR which has had positive impacts on how front line services are delivered locally.

14.WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The library service will continue to deliver and develop the new services which have arisen from the PVR recommendations and continue to actively promote use of libraries in the Borough.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Peter Milton

Head of Cultural Services

peter.milton@surreycc.gov.uk

Telephone 0208 541 9950