

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (REIGATE & BANSTEAD)****DATE:** 27 April 2015**LEAD OFFICER:** Kelly Saini Badwal, Library Sectors Manager**SUBJECT:** Library Service Review 2015**DIVISION:** Reigate & Banstead**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

- (i) In its search for continuous improvement, and to reduce costs, the library service has recently completed a review which achieves a reduction in the library service's staffing budget of £227,000 for 2015-16 while seeking to retain and improve current levels of service.
- (ii) In addition to other elements, the review looked at the opening hours for all the community libraries, which include Reigate and Merstham. Libraries are currently divided into three levels of service offer:
 - Group A – main town libraries
 - Group B – town libraries
 - Group C – community libraries

Across the 17 Group C community libraries there is a huge disparity of opening hours. The review aims to address this by standardising opening hours in three tiers. The number of hours for each library has been determined by size, issues, visits, activities, services offered and location.

- (iii) The opening hours of the Community Partnered Libraries (CPLs) are out of scope, as opening hours are set by local steering groups, within an agreed framework with local committees.

RECOMMENDATIONS:**The Local Committee (Reigate & Banstead) is asked to agree that:**

1. Reigate library increase its hours from 35.5 hours per week to 42 hours per week to bring it into line with the Group B libraries. This means that Reigate library offers a wider service to local users. The library will close on Mondays in line with other Group B libraries but the number of hours open will increase overall, including opening on Wednesdays (when the library is currently closed). Please see attached Appendix 1 for opening hours.
2. The number of hours Merstham library opens does not change but the opening times will be altered. Please see attached Appendix 1 for opening hours.
3. The overall change in hours in Reigate and Banstead is an increase of 6.5 hours per week.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Customer feedback, including from “lapsed user” surveys, shows that it is easier for residents to remember standardised hours across libraries. There was positive feedback after introducing standardisation at Group A and B libraries in 2008. (Please see Appendix 2 for further details about Group A, B and C libraries).
- The majority of Group C community libraries’ opening hours have not altered for many years, and historically were originally based on local circumstances that no longer exist. Across the community libraries there is a huge disparity of hours so the approach has had to be to standardise within three levels of opening hours according to size and use.
- Standardisation allows the library service to implement new standardised staffing structures and staffing allocations across the County. This will ensure the library service has sufficient, cost effective, frontline cover across libraries, with relevant staff in the right place at the right time.
- The library service review identified changes in the patterns of use in Group C community libraries. The recommended changes to opening hours reflect how local residents are now using these libraries. The Library review identified patterns of use in the group C community libraries and have retained the most well used opening periods as a core of the new proposed opening hours.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The public library service in Surrey is part of the everyday lives of those living, working or studying in Surrey. The library service is a pivotal service for Surrey County Council – not least because of increasing demands due to changing demographics and diminishing resources. The library service will continue to support the council’s priorities such as wellbeing, economic prosperity and resident experiences. The library service’s overall objective continues to be to develop effective and cost efficient services with which increased numbers of residents will engage, and to increase the variety of ways in which it touches and supports their lives. To do this the library service is doing four things:
- a) Continuing to provide an excellent core library service with a strong emphasis on reading, literature and literacy in all its forms.
 - b) Providing increasing opportunities for residents to access or participate in cultural experiences of all kinds, in and through the library service.
 - c) Developing the service’s role further in supporting wellbeing, ageing well and combating social and technological exclusion. Working more with the county council to provide cost effective services in or through libraries, which support the council’s efforts to cope with rising social care and education costs. Increasingly the library service works collaboratively with partners, to face and manage these challenges.
 - d) In the complex environment within which the library service needs to operate successfully in order to survive, the service needs to re-focus resources from a functional delivery model to one which emphasises place and locality, and become even more integrated and seamless with the wider agendas of Surrey.

Since the last library service restructure in 2008/9 much has changed within libraries and the county council. Savings and efficiencies are a part of the review, but not the main purpose.

A reduction in the staffing establishment has not been the main driver of the review although some roles are significantly affected. The main emphasis has been to look at what the library service is doing and see if it is fit for the future, to ensure the right arrangements are in place to develop an even stronger and better integrated service. While the recommendations of this report concentrate on the front line, the review also took the opportunity to look across the whole of the library service staffing, also implementing changes and efficiencies in other teams which deliver the work of the library service, including the stock and digital teams, and the team which delivers the council's priorities through the library service e.g children's services, avoiding digital exclusion, and helping people live and age well. From the local perspective, the two key changes are a new way of managing and staffing libraries, and proposed new opening hours, in order to increase efficiencies in how the service staffs libraries on a daily basis. Libraries will be grouped into clusters of 6 - 8 geographically close libraries, under the management of a Cluster Manager. This will help ensure the service has sufficient frontline cover across libraries, with relevant staff in the right place at the right time. Please see Appendix 3 for details of clusters.

For day to day management, and to support and provide continuity to close shared local relationships with users, partners and stakeholders, libraries are then managed in sub-cluster of 3-4 libraries by small teams of duty managers who will be the key contacts for those libraries, with stakeholders, partners and local organisations including schools, Friends groups and Local History groups having a named local contact.

In line with the library services' strategy, self-service terminals will be installed in Reigate library. Currently 38 libraries have had self-service terminals installed and the customer experience has proved to be positive especially when supported by proactive visible staff. Self service frees up more time for staff to directly help library users

In carrying out these changes the library service followed the council's managing change procedures closely, starting with a substantial staff engagement exercise in which staff were able to feed back their views on what they thought were the strengths and areas for development for the current service and its structure. Staff were given opportunities to express preferences for where they work, and the service also takes into account caring responsibilities and health issues. However it must be recognised that any period of major change can be stressful and every effort has been made to support staff through this.

The impact of the review on customers is expected to be very positive. The library service is developing in order to build resilience and flexibility, to deliver new services and provide a better customer experience. The alterations in opening hours – and the infrastructure behind them – is part of this change.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 Efficiencies and cost savings through standardisation of hours and an altered infrastructure.

- 2.2 Better customer care through standardised processes and new roles that focus on the customer experience, supported by training.
- 2.3 Retaining and developing good quality staff.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Option 1 :Make the proposed changes to the opening hours of Reigate and Merstham libraries. The changes will enable the library service to manage local timetables and staffing across the service, within the budget, to ensure cover. This will also help residents with standardised hours which are easier to remember.

Efforts will be made to minimise inconvenience for users in the change period. This will be mitigated as much as possible by communicating widely to library users using all media available and making clear the availability of online renewals and requests, drop-boxes at libraries, and other ways of helping users settle into the new patterns of hours

- 3.2 Option 2: Leave the opening hours as they are currently. The impact of this is that the local community will not benefit from increased hours; the current confusion over opening hours will continue; the library service will not be able to make the necessary staffing changes across the board; and the target cost savings will not be achieved.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 Staff, Unison and GMB were engaged in line with the council's 'Change Management' policy, and the library service is working closely with HR. A succession of staff engagement sessions and workshops has been held throughout the review period.
- 4.2 Library service "lapsed user" surveys, and our ongoing customer satisfaction surveys in libraries have also informed this work.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Across the service the new structure and ways of working resulting from the library review will achieve annual staffing savings of £227,000.
- 5.2 The increase in opening hours recommended by this report, were costed into the library review funded by the overall savings achieved. There is therefore no financial pressure created by the recommended increase in opening hours.
- 5.3 The proposed staffing budget has been agreed with the Section 151 Officer and included within the 2015/20 Medium Term Financial Plan.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out. The change in pattern at Reigate will impact on users not being able to use the library on a Monday but other local libraries (Redhill, Epsom and Dorking) are open. Library renewals, fines and fees will reflect Monday closures. There is also a wide range of digital transactions and information which can be accessed 24/7.

- 6.2 Reigate and Merstham libraries will not be open at exactly the same time as before but opening hours overall will increase (+6.5 hours).
- 6.3 Currently, rhymetime runs on Mondays and Thursdays at Reigate library and the proposed closure on Mondays will necessitate a change of day. Local consultation with current users will be undertaken to ascertain the best time to run a replacement session. Rhymetime will be run every day across libraries within the borough (Banstead, Horley, Merstham, Redhill, Reigate and Tattenhams).
- 6.4 There may be an impact on staff whose individual timetables and location may need to change. The library service is consulting with individual staff to manage any change in hours or location of work. Clusters and sub-clusters have been set up to minimise travel and make use of public transport networks where possible.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 There will be impact on the local Reigate and Merstham communities, but research shows that library users tend to access more than one local library. Although Reigate library will be closed on Mondays, an increase of 6.5 hours per week will extend the access for commuters, busy parents, students and those users who want to use local community Group C libraries on a Wednesday.
- 7.2 For Merstham, the impact will be minimal and users will benefit from an increase in opening hours on Mondays and Thursdays. An earlier closure (reduction of one hour) on Tuesdays will have minimal impact on the community, as anecdotally and statistical data shows that libraries are less busy before 10am and after 5pm.
- 7.3 The library service has been hugely successful in doubling its online digital use, and users will continue to benefit from a wide range of digital services including online renewals.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Continuing accessible provision of libraries locally will reduce possible travel to other libraries
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Continuing accessible provision of library services to children and carers locally will support the council's aim of giving every child a good start in life.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	Continuing accessible library provision locally will allow libraries to continue to contribute to health and well being as they do now

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 9.1 It is recommended that Reigate library increase its hours from 35.5 hours per week to 42 hours per week. This means that Reigate library becomes a Group B library offering a wider service to local users. The library will close on Mondays in line with other Group B libraries but the number of hours open will increase overall, including opening on Wednesdays (when the library is currently closed).
- 9.2 The number of hours Merstham library opens does not change but the opening times be altered.
- 9.3 The overall change in hours in Reigate and Banstead is an increase of 6.5 hours per week.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 The new library staff structure will be in place by 1 May, with the proposed changes to opening hours being implemented for 1 September 2015.
- 10.2 The library service will give at least six weeks' notice to customers of amended opening hours. Staff will be briefed and notices will be put up locally and online. Emails and social media will be used to alert users to the change. All of the Council's communication channels will be used to positively communicate the recommended changes. Any concerns raised by residents will be addressed.

Contact Officer:

Kelly Saini Badwal, Library Sectors Manager
E: kelly.sainibadwal@surreycc.gov
M: 07968 832372

Consulted:

Library Service Staff
HR

Annexes:

Appendix 1 – Group A, B and C libraries
Appendix 2 – Reigate and Merstham library opening hours – current and proposed
Appendix 3 – Cluster models

Sources/background papers:

Library Service Review Consultation Report
