



WOKING JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 24 JUNE 2015

LEAD OFFICER: KELLY SAINI BADWAL, SENIOR MANAGER, CUSTOMER NETWORK

SUBJECT: LIBRARY SERVICE REVIEW 2015

AREA: WOKING

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

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.

In addition to other elements, the review looked at the opening hours for all the community libraries, which includes Knaphill and West Byfleet.

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. In Woking this is Byfleet CPL.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Woking Joint Committee is asked to agree that

(i) the opening hours for Knaphill and West Byfleet libraries as set out in Annexe 2 and paragraphs 3 and 9 of this paper be changed.

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 Annex 1 for further details about Group A, B and C libraries).

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.

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.

1.2 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.

1.3 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, for example: 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.

2. ANALYSIS:

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

Libraries are currently divided into three levels of service offer:

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- 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 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. There are 3 levels of standardisation in Group C community libraries due to the wide variation in current opening hours, size and location of building and use.

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 Annex 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. The Library Service will provide activities across the Cluster ensuring there is an activity running every day from Monday to Saturday.

2.2 Better customer care through standardised processes and new roles that focus on the customer experience, supported by training.

In line with the library services' strategy systems and processes are being standardised. The aim is that a customer will experience the same level of customer service excellence from any Surrey library they visit. Standardisation will also support staff to be able to work at any library. A new Learning and Skills team will support staff to develop their skills and knowledge.

2.3 Retaining and developing good quality staff.

In carrying out the staffing restructure 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.

2.4 Knaphill Library

The number of hours Knaphill Library opens will remain the same (31.5 hours per week) and the opening times will be altered to include opening on Mondays and closure on Wednesdays. The opening hours on Tuesdays will also be reduced. Please see attached Annex 2 for opening hours.

2.5 West Byfleet Library

The number of hours West Byfleet Library opens will increase (from 28.5 hours to 30 hours) and the opening times will be altered to include opening on. The opening hours on Thursdays and Saturdays will be reduced. Please see attached Annex 2 for opening hours.

- 2.6 The overall change in hours in Knaphill and West Byfleet libraries is an increase of 1.5 hours per week. 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.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Option 1: Make the proposed changes to the opening hours of Knaphill and West Byfleet 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. RISK MANAGEMENT:

- 6.1 There is a risk that some local staff may be impacted by the changes to opening hours. We will manage this by offering staff suitable alternatives to suit their personal needs where we can.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 There will be impact on the local Knaphill and West Byfleet communities, but research shows that library users tend to access more than one local library. Although Knaphill and West Byfleet libraries will be closed on Wednesdays, an increase of 1.5 hours per week will extend access for commuters, busy families, students and those users who want to use local community Group C community libraries on a Monday.
- 7.2 For Knaphill, users will benefit from an increase in opening hours on Mondays. 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 had a massive increase in digital use, and users will continue to benefit from a wide range of digital services including online renewals and online information.

8. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The change in pattern at Knaphill library will impact on users not being able to use the library on a Wednesday and shorter opening hours on Tuesdays but other local libraries (Woking) are open.
- 8.2 The change in pattern at West Byfleet library will impact on users with shorter opening hours on Thursdays and Saturdays but other local libraries (Woking) are open.
- 8.3 Library renewals, fines and fees will be revised in line with the new patterns of hours. There is also a wide range of digital transactions and information from within the libraries' digital services which can be accessed 24/7.
- 8.4 Knaphill and West Byfleet libraries will not be open at exactly the same time as before but opening hours overall will increase (+1.5 hours).
- 8.5 Local consultation with current users will be undertaken to ascertain the best time to run activities. Each library will continue with a range of activities such as rhymetimes and computer skills sessions and a range of activities will be run every weekday across libraries within the borough. 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.
- 8.6 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out. The change in pattern at Knaphill and West Byfleet will impact on users not being able to use the library on a Wednesday but other local libraries (Woking, Byfleet and New Haw) are open. The additional opening hours at Knaphill and West Byfleet libraries will improve ease of access overall.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising

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	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 implications	Continuing accessible library provision locally will allow libraries to continue to contribute to health and well being as they do now
Human Resource/Training and Development	There will be an increase in the amount of training and development needed for staff to ensure they can follow standardised procedures in any library and deliver the same high level of customer service.

9.1 Human Resource/Training and Development

The Library Service has introduced a new Learning and Skills team to lead on delivering training to staff and learning for the public. The team will support all staff to be trained and developed to provide a standardised high quality service to all customers.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

10.1 The number of hours open for Knaphill library do not change. The library will open on Mondays but close on Wednesdays. The number of hours Knaphill Library is open on Tuesdays will reduce by 1 hour.

10.2 The number of hours for West Byfleet library increases from 28.5 hours to 30 hours per week. The library will open on Mondays and the number of hours it is open on Thursdays and Saturdays will reduce by 1.5 hours.

10.3 The overall change in hours in Knaphill and West Byfleet libraries is an increase of 1.5 hours per week.

11. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

11.1 The new library staff structure is now in place. The proposed changes to opening hours will be implemented for September 2015.

11.2 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.

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Consulted:

Library Service Staff
HR

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Group A, B and C libraries
Annex 2 – Current and Proposed opening hours
Annex 3 – Cluster models

Sources/background papers:

Library Service Review Consultation Report

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