

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 2 October 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Communities

PORTFOLIO: Community and Sport

SUBJECT: Efficiency Review of Halton Library Service

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to report the findings of the public consultation on proposals for the future delivery arrangements for the Library Service in Halton, and to outline the proposed service delivery arrangements, following an in-depth review undertaken by the Efficiency Programme Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Board:

- (i) notes the contents of the report;**
- (ii) considers the attached documentation, which provides detail of the findings of the public consultation on the future delivery of the Library Service; and**
- (iii) approves the service delivery model outlined in the report**

3.0 BACKGROUND TO THE EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

3.1 The Efficiency Programme commenced in 2008 and has reviewed the way in which the Council works across a number of areas. In each of the reviews undertaken, consideration is given to how the Council can continue to deliver services to the people of Halton in a more efficient and cost effective way.

3.2 The Council was set a tough efficiency agenda by the Government with the 2008/09 grant settlement, which covered a three year period. The Efficiency Programme is one part of the Council's response to this.

3.3 The Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 set out how the deficit reduction plan was to be achieved. Overall, government departments faced a loss of funding of an average of 19% over the four years of the review in order to save £83 billion. This was in keeping with the Government's policy to remove the structural deficit by 2014/15. The resulting impact on Local Government is that cuts of 7.25% in real terms have been made in each of the four years from 2011/12 to 2014/15.

- 3.4 The Comprehensive Spending Review 2013 did not ease that pressure on Local Authorities and it is anticipated that the Council will face further revenue funding cuts in the region of 10% from 2015/16 and onwards.
- 3.5 The Efficiency Programme alone will not be able to close that gap but it has and will continue to contribute to the drive across the Council that is now in place to deliver the significant savings required to balance the budget over the coming years.
- 3.6 The Programme is made up of a number 'workstreams' that focus on individual service delivery units, the cost of delivery, what is delivered, how it is delivered, to whom it is delivered, how the business area is managed, how the area compares to similar providers in other authorities and the wider market place (where applicable).
- 3.7 Whilst the key facets of the programme have remained in place since its inception, the effect of the deficit reduction programme being delivered by Government means inevitably that the focus has shifted more towards cost reduction. This is unlikely to change in the near future.
- 3.8 All Council directorates, departments and services are within the scope of the Programme. The scope of individual workstreams is determined on a case by case basis as they are set up.
- 3.9 An Efficiency Programme Board was set up in 2009/10. The Programme Board provides senior level direction for the programme, carries out a detailed examination of the service in question, and makes recommendations related to the implementation and delivery of the programme.
- 3.10 To date, there have been four waves of the Efficiency Programme completed. The Library service previously participated in Wave 2, when savings of £157,000 were realised with the review led and implemented by the Communities Directorate.
- 3.11 As part of Wave 5 of the efficiency programme, a fresh Library service review is being conducted by the Efficiency Programme Board, who have gathered information from the Library service, which has helped construct the two options now proposed for public consultation. The current operating budget of the Library Service is circa £2.2 million.

4.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Efficiency Review of Halton Library Service

- 4.1 A range of possible options have been considered for the future of the service and two were put forward for public consultation in July. A consultation ran from 14th July to 14th August 2014, in which the public and stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on both of the proposals and were also able to offer alternative proposals, to either reduce costs or generate income.

Both the library services and the Efficiency Programme Board were keen to ensure that as part of any recommendations for the future of the Library Service that two key criteria were met. They were that all four of the Borough's libraries remain open and that any new arrangements should still be able to deliver the strategic objectives contained within the Council's adopted Libraries Strategy. Those objectives are:

- Inspiring a community of readers and learners
- Employment, enterprise and developing online skills
- Extending access through innovation and new technology
- Providing a relevant and responsive library service
- Workforce development

Given the first criteria of keeping the Borough's four libraries open the focus of the review, given the need to make savings, has inevitably focussed on opening hours. The two options put forward meet both of the criteria set and were principally about opening hours.

They also sought views on the viability of maintaining the universal mobile library service and the need to address services to the elderly and housebound, given the ageing population profile of the Borough.

The Council is minded to cease the universal mobile library provision but will consult further before a final decision is made, this consultation will commence immediately.

- 4.2 1011 responses were received to the consultation. An analysis of all responses received has been undertaken and is contained in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.3 The majority of respondents stated a preference for Option 1, which maintains the most opening hours and yields a lower financial saving.
- 4.4 Based upon the consultation findings, a proposed schedule of opening hours has been drawn up. This is contained in Appendix 2 to this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The service delivery model that has been developed following consultation will generate gross staffing budget savings of around £360,000 from a present gross staffing budget of £1,321,140. In addition to this there is an opportunity to achieve non-staffing savings of up to £80,000 through the application of a reduction in the budgets for the purchase of books and other supplies and services across the Libraries Service.

6.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children and Young People in Halton

No adverse change to the services offered to children and young people are anticipated.

7.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

No adverse change to the services related to employment, learning and skills are anticipated.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

The Library Service will continue to support public and other health initiatives as currently.

7.4 A Safer Halton

None.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 The purpose of the review is to secure a reduction in the cost of the delivery of the service, given the significant challenge the Council faces in setting a balanced budget. The Efficiency Programme approach attempts to do that in a way that protects, as much as possible, the service provided to the public.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the static provision for the Library Service.

10.0 REASONS(S) FOR DECISION

10.1 The recommendations relating to Library opening times contained within the report have been developed following a period of public consultation, details of which can be found in the report.

10.2 There were 1011 individual responses to the questionnaire; 84% of respondents preferred 'Option 1' (see below). While the majority of people selecting Option 1 as their preference also agreed with the opening times as stated in the questionnaire, a number of comments were received suggesting minor amendments to the proposed hours. These suggestions included a range of comments relating to earlier opening times (i.e. before 10am), and moving the late night opening (until 7pm) from Monday to another weekday.

OPTION 1

	Halton Lea		Widnes		Ditton		Runcorn	
Monday	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–
	19:00		19:00		17:00		17:00	
Tuesday	10:00	–	12:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–
	17:00		17:00		18:00		18:00	
Wednesday	12:00	–	12:00	–	CLOSED		CLOSED	
	18:00		18:00					
Thursday	12:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	-	10:00	-
	17:00		17:00		17:00		17:00	
Friday	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	-	10:00	-
	17:00		17:00		17:00		17:00	
Saturday	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	-	10:00	-
	15:00		15:00		15:00		15:00	
Sunday	CLOSED		CLOSED		CLOSED		CLOSED	

10.3 As a result of the number of people selecting Option 1, and the suggested alternatives, the recommended opening hours are as included in the report, and repeated for clarity below.

RECOMMENDED OPENING HOURS

	Halton Lea		Widnes		Ditton		Runcorn	
Monday	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–
	17:00		17:00		17:00		17:00	
Tuesday	09:00	–	09:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–
	19:00		19:00		18:00		18:00	
Wednesday	10:00	–	10:00	–	CLOSED		CLOSED	
	17:00		17:00					
Thursday	09:00	–	09:00	–	09:30	-	09:30	-
	19:00		19:00		17:00		17:00	
Friday	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	-	10:00	-
	17:00		17:00		17:00		17:00	
Saturday	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–	10:00	–
	14:30		14:30		14:30		14:30	
Sunday	CLOSED		CLOSED		CLOSED		CLOSED	
Total Hours	45.5		45.5		33		33	

[Grey shading represents changes from Option 1 as it appeared in the consultation questionnaire]

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 The public consultation questionnaire (available on request) included two possible options for opening hours. Option 2 (see below) was preferred by only 12% of respondents and consequently this option has been rejected on the basis of the public consultation.

OPTION 2

	Halton Lea		Widnes		Ditton		Runcorn	
Monday	10:00 15:00	–	10:00 15:00	–	CLOSED		CLOSED	
Tuesday	10:00 14:00	–	12:00 18:00	–	10:00 14:00	–	14:00 18:00	–
Wednesday	12:00 18:00	–	12:00 18:00	–	10:00 14:00	–	10:00 14:00	–
Thursday	12:00 18:00	–	10:00 14:00	–	14:00 18:00	-	10:00 14:00	-
Friday	10:00 15:00	–	10:00 15:00	–	CLOSED		CLOSED	
Saturday	10:00 16:00	–	10:00 16:00	–	10:00 14:00	-	10:00 14:00	-
Sunday	CLOSED		CLOSED		CLOSED		CLOSED	

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 It is anticipated that any new opening arrangements will be implemented across the library service in March/April 2015.

13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None within the meaning of the Act.

EFFICIENCY REVIEW OF THE LIBRARIES SERVICE**PUBLIC CONSULTATION ANALYSIS – SEPTEMBER 2014**

The library consultation period ran for a calendar month, from July 14th to August 14th 2014. The total number of responses received was 1011.

The consultation took the form of an online or paper questionnaire. These were distributed and publicised widely via a range of channels including: copies available at all libraries, community centres and One Stop Shops; distribution to housebound service users; articles in the local press (twice during the consultation period); inclusion in the Schools' Circular; and circulation by e-mail to a variety of Council partners through the Community Development team and Halton Strategic Partnership.

Respondents were asked a range of questions relating to their use of the libraries, and were presented with two options for possible opening hours as follows:

OPTION 1

	Halton Lea	Widnes	Ditton	Runcorn
Monday	10:00 – 19:00	10:00 – 19:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00
Tuesday	10:00 – 17:00	12:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 18:00
Wednesday	12:00 – 18:00	12:00 – 18:00	CLOSED	CLOSED
Thursday	12:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 17:00
Friday	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 17:00
Saturday	10:00 – 15:00	10:00 – 15:00	10:00 - 15:00	10:00 - 15:00
Sunday	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED

OPTION 2

	Halton Lea	Widnes	Ditton	Runcorn
Monday	10:00 – 15:00	10:00 – 15:00	– CLOSED	CLOSED
Tuesday	10:00 – 14:00	12:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 14:00	14:00 – 18:00
Wednesday	12:00 – 18:00	12:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 14:00	10:00 – 14:00
Thursday	12:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 14:00	14:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 14:00
Friday	10:00 – 15:00	10:00 – 15:00	– CLOSED	CLOSED
Saturday	10:00 – 16:00	10:00 – 16:00	10:00 – 14:00	10:00 – 14:00
Sunday	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED

Both options represented a reduction in opening hours as compared to the current operation of the libraries, Option 1 maintaining 85% and Option 2 53% of current opening hours. Respondents were made aware of the potential savings of each option, being in the region of £400,000 and £500,000 respectively.

The consultation also included questions relating to the mobile and housebound services and use of technology both within and in order to access the library service.

The majority of respondents to the consultation were female (67%), while there was a good spread in terms of age groups over 25 years. Younger people (under 25) were under-represented, although parents/carers may have completed questionnaires on their behalf. Most people who completed the questionnaire were retired (29%), closely followed by those who were in full time employment (24%).

The responses to the consultation have been analysed by the Council's Customer Intelligence Unit. **[A summary of the overall responses, along with summaries by individual library can be found in the following pages]** – This analysis will be reviewed by the Library Services Staff over the next few months

Key themes from the responses overall are detailed below;

Current Library Usage

- Most respondents used the library at least once a week (40%), with the largest numbers using Halton Lea or Widnes as their main library.
- The majority of the respondents use the library during the morning, between the hours of 10:00am and 1:00pm, although a significant proportion use the libraries during the afternoon, with evenings being the least well used time period.

Preferred Options

- There was a significant preference for Option 1 in terms of the opening hours (84%), and the most cited reason for this choice was the additional flexibility that the proposed opening times offered.
- Of the limited number of people who selected Option 2 as their preference, the most common reason for doing so was that the savings were greater.
- Respondents who preferred Option 1 generally were in agreement with the proposed opening times (72%), however, a number (27) of alternative suggestions/preferences were made including;
 - At least one morning per week opening at 9am in the main libraries

- Changes to late nights to Tuesday/Thursday in the main libraries (from Monday as proposed)
- At least one morning per week opening at 9:30am (as currently) at the smaller libraries

Internet and Technology

- 601 respondents do not access Halton Library services via the internet (62%), although 574 would be interested in doing this in the future.
- A small majority (42% compared to 38%) would be interested in making use of an e-reader to borrow books from the library, if help and advice was available on how to use it. The remainder (21%) responded 'Don't know'.
- Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) use the libraries' free WiFi on a personal device and under half (43%) make use of the public access PCs provided in the library.
- The most common reason to use the library PCs was for 'Internet surfing' (58%), followed by 'Job search' (34%) and Social Media (24%).

Housebound Service

- 63 people either use or have used the housebound service, and most people (59%) had heard of the service.
- 24 people said that stopping the housebound service would have a 'great impact' on them whilst 19 people said it would have 'no impact'.

Mobile Library Service

- The majority of people (66%) said that they had heard of the mobile library but did not use it and 8% had not heard of it. 251 respondents said they either currently use or have used the mobile library in the past.
- If the mobile library was to be stopped, 34% of those who use or have used the mobile library said it would have 'a great impact' on them and 29% said it would have 'some impact' on them. The remainder (38%) said it would have 'no impact'.
- Of the 1011 respondents, 64 people stated that they use the mobile library most. Of these people, 53 said that stopping the mobile library would have a great impact on them and 11 said it would have some impact on them.
- Of the 64 people who use the mobile library most, 42 said that they would use alternative provision if it was stopped.
- Of those respondents who stated that they used the mobile library most (64 people), the majority do not access library services using the internet. Views were split (50:50) as to whether they would consider using it in the future.

- Of mobile library users, the majority (44%) responding to the consultation indicated that they would not be interested in making use of an e-reader to borrow books, 36% said they would consider it and 21% didn't know.

Savings and Income Generation Suggestions

As part of the public consultation, the public were asked to make suggestions about how the Library Service could make savings or generate new income. The following suggestions and views were received; and have been categorised into themes and will be considered by the Library Services Staff in more detail over the next few months.

Events (68 suggestions)

Comments range from book readings, family fun days, more child focussed events, poetry reading, music events for local musicians, exhibitions / culture, themed events, film nights, craft weekends, bingo and coffee mornings.

Charges General (68 suggestions)

The ideas range from printing, charge schools, family history, faxing, rhyme-time, Housebound service, overdue books, rent computer games, photo print service, child care service / crèche, e-books, children's parties, classes e.g. language, special interest groups, subscription fee to archives / articles etc.

Café (67 suggestions)

In general comments focused on the varied café provision in all libraries and views were expressed on how the café provision could be improved.

Charges for computer use (52 suggestions)

Comments in general specify that the first hour should be free. Some comments refer to users being on computers for too long.

Room Hire (51 suggestions)

Comments refer to the charges for meetings rooms for businesses, classes and HBC. Renting out rooms when closed to businesses etc. would generate extra income.

Book Sales (41 suggestions)

Comments include sales of old stock, some comments refer to not just at the library but on e-bay or 'pop-up' book stalls.

Ideas for Opening / Closing (33 suggestions)

Comments range from suggestions of closure on certain days, stopping certain services completely and ideas for opening times.

Fine Recovery / Lost Stock (30 suggestions)

In general comments focus on those who have outstanding library fines – why aren't they made to pay? Better systems to track service users who haven't paid, use of ID to prevent services users reregistering with a different address.

Ideas for Shared Services / Staffing (28 suggestions)

HDLs, service provision at Ditton Library / Children's Centre and the use of space in the libraries are just some of the topics discussed.

Organisation / Layout (27 suggestions)

Halton Lea, handling of teenagers and children causing disturbance, turn lights and computers off, stop use of compliments slips and headed paper are just some of the suggestions made.

Advertising (26 suggestions)

Comments range from better advertising of library services via Twitter, web and Facebook; some feel they don't hear about events to charging companies to use free space to advertise their services and corporate sponsorship.

Book Ordering / Book Systems (24 suggestions)

Comments relate to only buying books that the service users want to read or not so many copies of less popular material, have a better online book management system that the public can use, buy books from Amazon or book clubs to keep costs down, QR Scanning facility for books and Amazon collection points, change books more often to keep interest.

DVD / CD / Games Rental (17 suggestions)

DVD rental and some mention of CDs and computer games.

Sell Stationery (17 suggestions)

Pens, envelopes, plastic wallets, greetings cards etc.

Funding / Grants: 8 / Donations (8 suggestions)

Apply for funding / grants and have donation boxes.

Subscriptions: (7 suggestions)

Should the libraries subscribe to publications that no-one reads or get so many copies (this includes magazines and newspapers)?

E-Books (5 suggestions)

Allow service users to order e-books.

Book Order Charge (3 suggestions)

Charge for a book ordering service e.g. people buy at library rather than from Amazon.

EFFICIENCY REVIEW OF THE LIBRARIES SERVICE**SERVICE DELIVERY PROPOSAL – SEPTEMBER 2014**

Following the public consultation feedback, consideration should be given to adopting an option which is a variation of Option 1. The following opening hours are suggested as a variation to Option 1:

POST-CONSULTATION: PROPOSED

	Halton Lea	Widnes	Ditton	Runcorn
Monday	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00
Tuesday	09:00 – 19:00	09:00 – 19:00	10:00 – 18:00	10:00 – 18:00
Wednesday	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	CLOSED	CLOSED
Thursday	09:00 – 19:00	09:00 – 19:00	09:30 - 17:00	09:30 - 17:00
Friday	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 – 17:00	10:00 - 17:00	10:00 - 17:00
Saturday	10:00 – 14:30	10:00 – 14:30	10:00 – 14:30	10:00 – 14:30
Sunday	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Total Hours	45.5	45.5	33	33

[Grey shading represents changes from Option 1 as it appeared in the consultation questionnaire]

Changes from Consultation Proposal

The above suggested opening times take into account feedback from the consultation which indicated requirements for:

- At least one morning per week opening at 9am in the main libraries;
- Changes to late nights to Tuesday and Thursday in the main libraries (from Monday as proposed);
- At least one morning per week opening at 9:30am (as currently) at the smaller libraries;

These additions have been made, and necessary adjustments made to Saturday's proposed opening hours to ensure that total opening hours (and therefore costs) remain affordable once early mornings and an additional late evening opening have been added into the timetable.

The suggested opening times (above) mean that the libraries would be open for 157 hours per week (an increase of 3 hours per week on the consultation proposal). This represents 85.6% of current opening hours.

Outreach Provision – Mobile Library

The Council is minded to cease this provision but will consult further before a final decision is made, this consultation will start immediately. If agreed this cessation would avoid the significant cost of refurbishing / replacing the current vehicle, estimated to be between £20,000 (refurbishment) and in excess of £75,000 (replacement).

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the cessation of this aspect of the service and presented to Executive Board in due course in order that a final decision can be taken.

Outreach Provision - Library Service for Housebound users

It is proposed that the current service for housebound users will be retained. A cessation of the mobile library service may result in an increase in demand for this service. This would be monitored, and managed within the resources allocated to deliver the new service model as this service area tends to be age related.

Satellite Provision – Castlefield’s Community Centre

It is proposed that this aspect of service provision remains in place, and that it is monitored, and managed within the resources allocated to deliver the new service model.

Cost of suggested opening times

The cost of staff for the suggested opening times will be £952,000, representing a potential staff budget saving of £360,000.

Consultation with staff and Unions

It should be noted that staffing changes are subject to statutory consultation with staff and trade unions, as set out in employment legislation. Subject to adoption of the proposed service delivery model, that consultation process will take place with staff and trade unions. Responses to that consultation may result in changes to the way that the proposed service delivery model is staffed, which may in turn affect the savings available.