

Cabinet 19 July 2016

Appendix 2 Suggestions and comments received from Library Opening Hours Consultation and by letter and email, with responses and comments from the County Council

As part of the Opening Hours Consultation people were invited to give their general comments or suggestions on the proposals. We also asked whether there were alternative proposals, other than reducing opening hours, that could help achieve the necessary savings. A total of 651 comments were received from the 2,970 respondents. The majority of respondents (77%) had no comment to make on the proposals or were neutral towards them. 4% of comments were positive and 19% were negative.

We are very grateful to all respondents for their feedback and for the range of different ideas put forward. The table below list the general theme of each type of suggestion or comment received and the County Council's response.

Suggestion/Comment	Details	County Council Response/Comment
<p>Better marketing/promotion to get more people to use the library</p>	<p>The most popular suggestion for generating income was to improve marketing/promotion and for libraries to host more events, especially for children. In particular it was suggested that there should be better links with schools.</p>	<p>East Sussex libraries has a presence on social media through its Facebook page and through regular tweets. We issue numerous press releases to highlight the campaigns we run throughout the year to encourage people to take part in events such as the Summer Reading Challenge, which encourages children to keep up their reading during the summer holidays, Books on Prescription, which signposts people to reading material that helps with a range of physical and mental health issues, Black History Month, Reading Ahead, Reading Well, World Book Night, and other events. We also launched a monthly e-newsletter in 2016 which is sent to around 70,000 library members and others who have signed up for information about East Sussex libraries. This helps promote the different services and events that are available, such as the e-library, e-magazines and DVDs. Whilst an increase in the uptake in any of the services we charge for (such as DVD hire) helps generate income, encouraging more people generally to use the library unfortunately does not raise additional income or save money.</p>

		<p>We provide a separate Schools Libraries and Museums Service (SLAMS) which is available to any school within East Sussex and we also provide this as a service for Brighton and Hove Schools, for which Brighton and Hove City Council and their schools pay us. We are developing a long-term, strategic view of what needs our library service should meet over the next five to ten years, called a Strategic Commissioning Strategy and as part of this we will be reviewing SLAMS, including consideration of whether there is a wider role for SLAMS.</p>
<p>Rent out library space, including meeting rooms and/or share libraries with other organisations</p>	<p>This suggestion was about making better use of library facilities especially for community groups, evening classes etc. and to generate income from room hire.</p>	<p>We welcome the range of suggestions made. We have an income generation plan for libraries and the Strategic Commissioning Strategy will include a review of all income generation opportunities and a fundamental review of our buildings, to consider whether libraries could be provided more effectively in shared premises. We work with a number of partner organisations already, including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Jobs Hub in Eastbourne library and the Rother District Council information point at Rye library. We receive funding to deliver Learndirect courses, which help people improve their reading, writing, ICT and maths skills, and we have recently secured funding for one year from Job Centre Plus to deliver employment support in the more rural parts of the county. We have received enquiries from several organisations about renting space on a long-term basis within libraries, which we are actively following up. The County Council is also part of a project called SPACES, which is about a number of public sector bodies in the region joining up to make better use of their buildings and facilities and we will continue to progress ideas to share library space with other organisations to make better use of the space.</p> <p>As described above, there is sometimes a very good fit between libraries and partner organisations. However, the space and facility requirements that other organisations often have, or the impact that their customers would have on library users, means that sharing space would not work. In addition, many voluntary and public sector organisations face the same cost pressures that the County Council is under, and the level of income that these arrangements can potentially bring in is usually small in comparison with the costs of running the library service as a whole and</p>

		<p>cannot be guaranteed into the future.</p> <p>As part of our income generation plan we have recently publicised the availability of our meeting rooms and created a new online booking facility, which we hope will result in a significant increase in bookings.</p>
Cafés and coffee shops	<p>There were a large number of suggestions that more cafés and coffee shops would bring in additional income.</p>	<p>Cafés can provide library users with an enhanced experience and make the library more attractive as a place to come to. We know from users of Seaford library that the café is very popular. However, it would not be practical for us to create cafés in all of our libraries because of the limited space. They also require significant investment, and our own experience and the experience of other library authorities is that cafes tend only to make money in big libraries in cities. For these reasons we do not think that cafés and coffee shops would generate the level of savings required to eliminate the need to reduce library opening hours.</p>
Close full days - simplify opening times	<p>The most frequently mentioned idea to cut costs was to close for full days rather than half days. For many people using libraries, this was part of a general wish to have opening times (and closing times) that are easy to remember – although some suggested that this would also save heat and light.</p>	<p>In proposing the new library opening hours we have listened to the views people expressed when providing their comments as part of the consultation. There was no clear view that, in general, people prefer whole day opening and closing rather than half days. For some libraries there was a preference for the library to be open more frequently for fewer hours, whilst some respondents clearly prefer that the library is either open or closed all day. We recognise that many people do have a clear preference for opening hours that are consistent across the week at the same library, and wherever possible we have tried to do this. We agree that there are some benefits in terms of heating for libraries to be open for longer periods at a time, but these benefits are relatively small, and would not save enough money to mean that we could avoid reducing library opening hours, even as part of a package of measures. In addition, half day closures potentially offer greater access as the hours are spread over more days. Taking into account the fact that there is no clear view that people generally support this approach, it is not something that we intend to take forward at this point in time.</p>
Use more volunteers	<p>This was the second most popular cost-cutting option suggested.</p>	<p>We have a wide range of volunteering opportunities with 12 different volunteer roles. We have an excellent and very active volunteer base of well over 300 people who already help us deliver the Home Library Service for disabled and frail people who find it hard to get to a library. Volunteers</p>

		<p>also manage and work in our Bookends store in Eastbourne and help people get online through their role as computer buddies. The Summer Reading Challenge for children is also supported by volunteers many of whom are young people. Respondents to the Opening Hours Consultation were also invited to express an interest if they would like to know more about volunteering opportunities with the service. There was a very good response rate to this and we are extremely grateful to all those who gave us their contact details. They will be contacted with an offer of current volunteer roles within the service. The potential for further avenues of volunteer support, on top of those already used effectively by the service, will be considered as work on the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy proceeds.</p>
<p>Fees and charges</p>	<p>There were various suggestions to introduce or increase charges for services, including having voluntary/compulsory annual membership fees, nominal fees for book loans and charges for using computers.</p>	<p>Legislation prevents us from charging for basic library services such as borrowing books. We charge for overdue items and charge reservation fees as well as for things like photocopying. This year we will be having a campaign to encourage library users to provide us with their email addresses so that we can contact them via email instead of post for things like overdue reminders and reservation notifications, many of which still go out by post. We will also review our reservation charges to ensure that the system of reserving items and having them sent to the library of the customer's choice covers the costs involved.</p> <p>It would be possible to charge for the use of computers. However consideration needs to be given to the numbers of people who are using library computers who may not have access to IT at home and people who rely on library computers to apply for benefits and jobs and may be least able to pay for the service. Charging for computers is something that we will consider as part of our income generation strategy, but is not a measure that we would want to implement now without fully understanding the impacts.</p> <p>Libraries do have the opportunity to charge for events, talks etc. and there are charges in place for some activities. We will consider further opportunities for charging as part of the Strategic Commissioning Strategy. However it is not anticipated that this option would secure the saving</p>

		required even as part of a package of options at the present time.
Close smaller libraries to keep larger ones open for longer	Some respondents suggested that the County Council should focus on the larger libraries and also ensure libraries near to each other have opening hours that complement each other	Prior to bringing forward the proposals to reduce library opening hours we considered whether it would be better to propose closing some of our libraries and keeping the others open for longer. The Strategic Commissioning Strategy that we are working on will aim to ensure that East Sussex has a modern, affordable library service that meets the needs of people who live and work in the county. This is a detailed piece of work that needs to be comprehensive, evidence-based, and not pre-judged. For that reason we do not expect the draft strategy to be ready before July 2017. Only once this review is complete will we know what the future service could look like and how services should be delivered to best meet need. There are no plans to close libraries during the development of our long term strategy for the service.
Donations, sponsorship and bequests	A number of respondents suggested that the Library and Information Service could be supported by donations (both ad hoc and by people donating monthly), as well as from corporate sponsorship and by people leaving money to the service in their wills.	<p>This is an idea of potential interest which we will be reviewing as part of the Strategic Commissioning Strategy. We would need to understand whether both residents and potential sponsors would be interested in this kind of support for our libraries and what levels of funding it might generate in future. We know that there are models for this elsewhere, but we do not know whether they would work here, given that the UK has a very different history from other countries of what is funded by government and the levels of giving by the public and companies. The New York Public library has a very successful campaign of philanthropic giving. It focuses upon individual donors, corporate supporters, and event/restricted giving. There is a comprehensive programme that enables any value of gift to be acknowledged, with a sliding scale of “benefits” depending upon the value of the donation.</p> <p>There are a number of things that the County Council would also need to consider in setting up a charitable giving structure, including charity law, trustees, Gift Aid etc.</p>
Stock	We received some suggestions about concentrating on books, and keeping fewer CDs, magazines etc.	Over the next three years we will reduce spending on library stock by £250,000, bringing East Sussex into line with other comparable library services. This is already part of our £2m savings target and at this stage we do not think that further savings from stock will be possible in the short-term, although we will continue to keep stock spending and the different

		<p>types of materials we purchase under review.</p> <p>We have increased spending on electronic items such as e-books, e-audio books, e-magazines, and online newspapers and reference materials, which are generally more cost-effective for us to provide. We have reduced spending on CDs, which have become less popular, although DVDs still make a profit, with approximately £1 spent on DVDs generating £2 back into the service. In 2015 we reviewed and reduced the newspapers we provide in each library.</p> <p>It is important to remember that our libraries meet a range of different needs in different formats and we seek to ensure that the materials we provide broadly correspond to the different needs that people have.</p>
<p>Sell more merchandise, cards, books, tickets etc.</p>	<p>A small number of respondents suggested this area as an income generation opportunity</p>	<p>ESCC libraries currently sell a small selection of merchandise, including magnifying sheets, greetings cards, stamps, jute bags and memory sticks.</p> <p>Some library services are selling merchandise on a larger scale than East Sussex. The range of merchandise sold in libraries across the UK is varied and covers stationery, cards, reading glasses to new books. In other local authorities income generated varies widely too, but footfall is a consideration when discussing potential for income generated. For example Jubilee library in Brighton sells a large amount of merchandise, but has the second highest footfall for a library in the UK, and has a prime high street location. This has to be offset against the costs of purchasing the items and the staff costs associated with selling them. Because the value of the kinds of items people want to buy in libraries is low, the potential for income generation in the smaller libraries that we have in East Sussex is limited, although there is probably more we could do to improve how prominently and attractively merchandise is displayed.</p> <p>We sell ex-library stock in Bookends, our book shop within Eastbourne library. It is fully managed and run by volunteers, with all ESCC libraries sending Bookends discarded stock as part of the stock policy. Rye and Seaford libraries also have two bays of Bookends which are unstaffed and for which payment is taken at the counter. Bookends is an excellent resource, but it only generates around £6,000-£7,000 per year. It would be</p>

		<p>worth considering whether some Bookends space could be provided in other libraries but it could not be replicated in all of them because we do not have the space. It is not likely, therefore, that we could generate significant additional income by having more stores for ex-library stock.</p> <p>We will review both of these areas, as well as other opportunities for income generation including ticket sales as part of the Strategic Commissioning Strategy.</p>
Fewer staff		<p>Over the three years from 2016/17 we will cut £1m from our annual staffing costs as a result of a staffing restructure to have fewer managers in the Library and Information Service, further efficiencies in staffing libraries, and from the reduction in opening hours, if approved. Whilst we will continue to keep staffing levels under review and seek to ensure the service remains as efficiently run as possible, we do not think that further staffing reductions are possible at present with the library service that we are currently providing.</p>
Increase Council Tax		<p>The budget agreed by Full Council on 9th February included a 3.99% Council Tax increase for 2016/17; this increase was the maximum limit set by Government and was on condition that 2% of the rise is used as a "social care precept" to fund adult care. Any rises over this limit would require a local referendum, which would cost several hundred thousand pounds and, based on the results from other councils that have held such referendums, is unlikely to be successful.</p> <p>The 3.99% increase will raise an additional £9.4m, but even this maximum increase will only go part way to funding the gap between resources and service delivery. With the need to save £70million over the next three years (starting with £20m in 2016/17) we will have to make some extremely difficult decisions which will have an unavoidable impact on frontline services.</p> <p>When setting the budget, rather than reducing funding by an equal proportion across all services, which does not allow for the flexibility of choices afforded by differential savings, we consulted with residents and partner organisations on how we should handle the reduced budget and</p>

		<p>what services should look like. We carefully considered the different views on how services could be provided in future with less money available, and developed our savings plan to protect some services that make a real difference to the most vulnerable people and put us in the best position to deal with continuing financial pressures over the next three years.</p> <p>We recognise that our decisions will have an effect on the community but given the scale of the reductions and the savings required it is simply not possible to continue funding all the services we previously funded.</p> <p>We will continue to lobby Government, directly and through national and regional groups, for a fair deal for counties, the South East, and East Sussex. We remain committed to involving people in decisions that affect them and value their input in planning, delivering and evaluating services through consultations and other feedback.</p>
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