

**Cabinet**

**19 July 2016**

**Libraries Transformation Programme**

**APPENDIX 4**

## **Proposed Changes to East Sussex Libraries' Opening Hours**

### **Rationale and Impact Assessment**

## Summary

This report explains the rationale for a proposal to change the opening hours of the 24 libraries in East Sussex, and summarises the findings of an assessment to evaluate its impact on the public. Between 2016/17 and 2018/19 the Council needs to save between £70 and £90 million. The proposal is one of a number of potential measures we have identified that could save £2 million from the running costs of our libraries and contribute towards the Council's overall savings plan.

The Library and Information Service (LIS) is responsible for 24 libraries plus the mobile library, the library at Lewes prison, an online e-library service, the Schools Library and Museums Service (SLAMS), a volunteer-run home library service and the online database - East Sussex Community Information Service ([www.ESCIS.org.uk](http://www.ESCIS.org.uk)). The libraries offer a range of services including borrowing services, computer and wifi access, and a variety of advice and training opportunities.

Customer demand for library services in East Sussex is changing. Over the past five years there has been an 87% rise in use of the e-library and a 568% increase in the download of e-books, compared to an 11% decrease in physical visits and a 20% reduction in stock issues. These figures reflect a national trend towards increased use of digital services. Despite these changes, there were still 1.79 million visits to East Sussex libraries in 2015/16, and we have 224,300 library members. The LIS has an extensive network of free computers and internet access (The People's Network). The People's Network is available in every library and last year there were over 320,000 individual sessions. Computer Buddy volunteers support library customers to access and use the internet and other computer functions, both on a pre-booked and drop-in basis.

Our libraries are not well used at all times of the day. We are proposing to reduce the overall amount of hours that all of our library buildings are open to the public. The opening hours proposals focus on reducing library opening hours at quieter times, whilst ensuring that people have access to services across the County when they are most used. It is proposed that libraries will only be open between the hours of 10.00am and 5.00pm, except for those libraries that are currently open later than 5.30pm.

However it is important to highlight that whilst the focus of the proposal is to save money by reducing library opening hours at times when libraries are least well used, we cannot make all the savings we need to make by only reducing opening hours before 10.00am and after 5.00pm. By making some further changes to opening hours, we would retain a comprehensive service. All libraries would continue to be open during the day at varying times throughout the week.

For those libraries which currently open later than 5.30pm it is proposed that these libraries would retain one evening opening until 6.00pm on a Thursday. We are also proposing to introduce evening opening until 6.00pm on Thursdays at Seaford library, which currently closes at 5.00pm throughout the week. Thursday is the busiest evening for our libraries in terms of visitors, transactions such as loans and renewals of items, and use of library computers. Thursday is also the day when most libraries are currently open later, and it tends to coincide with late night opening for shopping. We also think that having the same day each week makes it easier to remember when it is evening opening for libraries. The exception to this is Ringmer library, where in response to public consultation we are proposing not to have a late night opening but instead to open the library on Saturdays and for the library to be open on four days per week instead of the current three days.

Overall the proposal would result in an average reduction to opening hours of our 24 libraries by around 25% across East Sussex and would save us around £500,000 per year.

Public libraries are a statutory service and councils have a legal duty to provide them. By law we must ensure that the service we provide is “comprehensive and efficient”, and if we make any changes to our library service, we must ensure that it remains so. The purpose of undertaking an assessment of the impact of the changes we are proposing is to ensure that our library service would continue to be comprehensive and efficient and meet the needs of our residents and those who work or attend full time education in East Sussex. The law does not say how many libraries East Sussex has to have, or when they should be open. It also does not require our libraries to provide services to every person in the County at all times of the day, but that libraries should be accessible to everyone, using reasonable means. Our duty to provide an efficient library service means that we must make best use of the resources available to us, recognising any constraints which the County Council is facing.

This impact assessment is based on a detailed analysis of the data we hold about how people use our library services and what they have told us about their library usage from new surveys that we have commissioned of our customers, including surveys into who uses our libraries in the evenings. We have also consulted with the public on the proposals, to ensure that we have properly understood and taken into account their impact. Together, all of this data has informed this Rationale and Impact Assessment.

Data from our library management system shows that between 86% and 91% of visits to libraries, use of library computers and WiFi, and loans, renewals and returns of items take place between 10.00am – 5.00pm. The changes we are proposing will enable people to continue to use their library at varied times throughout the week from Monday to Saturday within the core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm. In addition for those libraries apart from Ringmer that are currently open later than 5.30pm, people would also be able to continue to use these on one evening per week. Most library users are retired, unemployed or work part time, and 95% of customers do not use the library every day.

85% of people who responded to the question in our Opening Hours Consultation asking whether they would still have access to a library if the Council implemented the proposed new opening hours said yes and 15% of people said no. We believe this is because most library users are likely to have the flexibility to visit libraries on varying days and at different times throughout the week, as services at all libraries would continue to be accessible at other times of the week.

We also know from the evening visitor count and surveys we commissioned for the 15 libraries that open during the evening period, that the number of visitors decreases significantly during the course of the evening until closing time. In total, almost 80% of all those we interviewed in the evening survey (from 4.00pm onwards) said they would not be adversely affected (to the point where they would be unable to use the library) by the planned changes.

There will, of course, be impacts on some residents as a result of the proposals. We have undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) of the proposals to identify what these impacts are likely to be, how they affect people, and what mitigation we can offer to lessen them. Impacts occur where groups of people have less flexibility than others over when they are able to visit libraries. The EqIA identified three main groups to whom this applies: people who work full-time, children and young people who are in full-time education, and people with a disability (especially where they rely on support from another individual or particular services to access the library). Those who work full-time are the most disproportionately affected because of their limited flexibility to use the library during the core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm on weekdays. However, we know from the results of the consultation and the evening surveys that the level of impact for these groups is small.

There was very little evidence that the libraries were being used as study spaces, with 8.5% of evening users describing themselves as students but only 2% of users saying that access to a study space was the main reason for their visit. 5.6% of visitors interviewed were aged under 16 and 10% were under 25. This does not suggest that reducing evening opening hours would have a disproportionate impact on young people using the library for homework or as a quiet study space.

Our proposals include mitigation for the impact of reductions in library opening hours by prioritising one late evening each week until 6.00pm for those libraries that already have evening provision (as described above), through lunch-time opening, and by all libraries opening on Saturdays. We will still provide 73 hours per week of library opening across the County after 4.00pm on weekdays that will be available to all users including school children and young people and 127.5 hours of library opening on a Saturday.

It is also important to remember that the LIS is a service that extends far beyond library buildings. The existing e-library offers library users the opportunity to access materials such as e-books, e-magazines and audio books online 24 hours a day without the need to visit the library and also to renew loans on items borrowed or place a reservation. Items can also be renewed 24 hours a day by phone using the library helpline. The Home Library Service delivers books and other materials to people who cannot easily use a library due to disability or frailty. If the proposed changes are implemented, we will promote the new opening hours widely in libraries and across the County to make sure people are aware of and are able to easily remember the changes. As part of this we will actively promote the e-library and other means of accessing the library service at alternative times.

We have considered what alternatives there are to reducing library opening hours, which included reviewing all of the different suggestions which people put forward in response to our Opening Hours Consultation. Unfortunately, however, it is not anticipated that the suggestions put forward would secure the level of savings required even as part of a package of measures. We have concluded that we cannot make the proposed savings associated with the reduction to the opening hours from other areas of our overall £2m savings plan. We also considered whether it would be better to propose closing some of our libraries and keeping the others open for longer. 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. This is a detailed piece of work that needs to be comprehensive, evidence-based, and not pre-judged. For that reason it will take us around 18 months to develop and will be drafted by 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.

This impact assessment concludes that the needs of the public that are met by using the library would still be fulfilled if we implemented the proposals and reduced opening hours by around 25% on average. We believe that the proposals are proportionate and fair, both in the contribution that they will make to the overall savings the County Council needs to make, and in the way that we propose to reduce opening hours at each library across the County. The proposals will enable us to continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for East Sussex.

## **1. Introduction**

By 2018/19, East Sussex County Council needs to save between £70 million and £90 million. Finding further savings from the services we deliver is getting harder and it will not be possible for us to find this level of savings without cutting some services and delivering other services differently in future.

We have identified that we could save £2 million from the running costs of our libraries and contribute towards the County Council's overall savings plan. We are implementing a Transformation Programme that consists of an initial internal review of the service to ensure that we are running it in the most efficient way possible. We recognise that people's needs from a library service is changing, and will continue to do so. Over the past five years there has been an 87% rise in use of the e-library and a 568% increase in the download of e-books, compared to an 11% decrease in physical visits and a 20% reduction in stock issues. These figures reflect a national trend towards increased use of digital services. Despite these changes, there were still 1.79 million visits to East Sussex libraries in 2015/16, and we have 224,300 library members.

In parallel to the internal review of the service, we are also developing a Strategic Commissioning Strategy, which will provide us with a broad, long-term, strategic view of what will or might be required for our library service in the future.

The development of the draft Strategy will be guided by priority outcomes that will be agreed upon early in the process. By focussing on outcomes, not the existing service, it will enable us to make the best possible use of resources, and develop a modern and sustainable library service.

## **2. The Proposals**

A detailed analysis of current library usage in East Sussex shows that our libraries are not well used at all times of the day. We are proposing to reduce the overall amount of time that all of our library buildings are open to the public. The opening hours proposals focus on reducing library opening hours at quieter times, whilst ensuring that people have access to services across the County when they are most used. It is proposed that libraries would only be open between the hours of 10.00am and 5.00pm, except for those libraries that are currently open later than 5.30pm. These libraries would stay open until 6.00pm on a Thursday. The exception to this is Ringmer library, where in response to public consultation we are proposing not to have evening opening, but instead to open the library on Saturdays and for the library to be open on four days per week instead of the current three days.

Overall the proposal would result in an average reduction to opening hours of around 25% across East Sussex and would save us around £500,000 per year. Whilst the focus of the proposal is to save money by reducing library opening hours at times when libraries are least well used, we cannot make all the savings we need to make by only reducing opening hours before 10.00am and after 5.00pm. By making some further changes to opening hours, it would be possible to retain a comprehensive service across the County. All libraries would continue to be open during the day on various days and at various times throughout the week. The current and proposed opening hours for each library are shown in Appendix 3 to the Cabinet Report.

East Sussex County Council is not the first local authority to do this. Authorities that had broadly similar opening hours to East Sussex libraries have reduced opening hours by approximately 10-25% in recent years in response to usage patterns and as part of wider

cost savings activities. For example, Devon County Council reduced its opening hours by 17% and Cornwall by 24%.

### 3. Impact Assessment

When deciding what changes to make to public libraries, the Council is legally obliged to abide by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This law states that public libraries are a statutory service and councils have a legal duty to provide them. We must ensure that the service we provide is “comprehensive and efficient”, and if we make any changes to our library service, we must ensure that it remains so.

The purpose of undertaking an assessment of the impact of the changes we are proposing is to ensure that our library service would continue to be comprehensive and efficient and meet the needs of our residents. The law does not say how many libraries East Sussex has to have, or when they should be open. It also does not require our libraries to provide services to every person in the County at all times of the day, but that libraries should be accessible to everyone using reasonable means. Our duty to provide an efficient library service means that we must make best use of the resources available to us, including any constraints which the County Council is facing.

A detailed analysis was undertaken for the draft Rationale and Impact Assessment of library usage across the 24 libraries in East Sussex for each weekday and Saturday (our libraries are closed on Sundays) for a number of four week periods in December 2014, May 2015 and August 2015. This analysis has been supplemented with the usage data from September to December 2015 to provide a more comprehensive understanding of library usage. The analysis included data from the library management system as well as three statistically representative surveys to understand what services are used, when, and by whom. An evening survey was undertaken in March and April 2016. In addition we undertook a 12 week public consultation on the proposed library opening hours between January and April 2016. The analysis of all of this data has enabled the County Council to assess the need of current library users. This helps us understand the impact of the proposed changes to opening hours, and will also form part of the separate needs assessment relating to the development of the long-term Strategic Commissioning Strategy for libraries. A summary of the evidence gathered for this assessment is provided below. A separate report (Appendix 1 to the Cabinet Report) provides the detailed analysis of the responses to the Opening Hours Consultation. All other analysis is contained in the following pages of this final Rationale and Impact Assessment.

<b>Evidence base</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Summary of work</b>
<b>In-library user surveys</b>	<b>June, August/September and December 2015</b>	Three surveys of library users aged 16 and over were carried out to gather up-to-date information about who is using our libraries and the reasons why. Surveys were carried out in each library and interviewers spoke to people using the library on different days of the week at different times. 1,836 library users were interviewed in the June survey, 2,034 library users were interviewed in the August/September survey and 1,883 users were interviewed in the December survey.
<b>Visitor counts</b>	<b>Dec 14 – Dec 15</b>	Analysis was undertaken of visitor count data that we have at a number of libraries with infra-

		red visitor counting equipment. The libraries used are representative of the different sizes and locations of libraries that we have. This information tells us how many people visit each of these libraries and what time they enter the library for a sample of different months.
<b>Analysis of library usage</b>	<b>Dec 14 – Dec 15</b>	<p>This analysis looked at the times of day when libraries are most used for the issuing and renewal of books and other items, including the use of self-service machines for a sample of different months.</p> <p>As not all of our libraries open after 5.00pm, we also undertook some separate analysis of the patterns of hourly library usage in the 15 libraries that currently open after 5.00pm, to compare them with patterns of usage in all libraries. The aim of this was to see if people used libraries that open later differently, e.g. is there more use later in the day in these libraries, and would we need to understand the impact of that in developing the proposals.</p>
<b>Opening hours consultation</b>	<b>Jan – Apr 2016</b>	This was a three month public consultation on the proposal to reduce opening hours by 25% on average. Consultation questionnaires were available online and in each library. The questionnaire was supported by a document which explained the reasons why the Council was proposing to make the changes and set out the current and proposed new opening times at each library. Respondents were asked a series of questions about how the proposals would affect them in order for us to properly understand the impact of the proposals.
<b>Evening visitor count and user survey</b>	<b>Mar – Apr 2016</b>	In order to provide a comprehensive picture of who uses libraries in the evenings and what they are being used for, we commissioned further surveys at the 15 libraries that currently have weekday opening beyond 5.00pm. The surveys took place in a term-time week in March 2016 and one week in the school Easter holidays in April 2016. The numbers of people entering the library between 4.00pm and closing time were recorded and as many as possible of these visitors were then interviewed. Each interviewee was asked to view the current and proposed opening hours, and give their opinion as to whether or not they would still be able to make effective use of the library.

In addition to library user surveys and analysing the data we hold, we have undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of the proposals to change library opening hours. The findings of the EqIA have helped us understand what impact, if any, these proposals would have on equalities, and this is summarised later in this report.

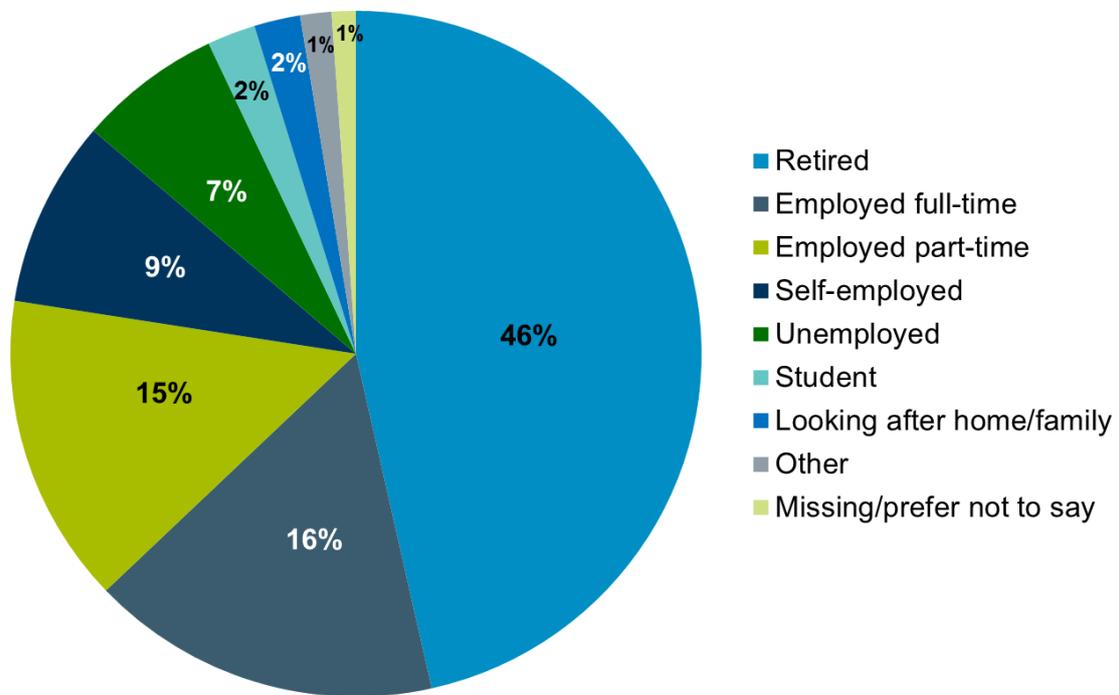
## Who uses our libraries?

### In-library user surveys (June, August/September and December 2015)

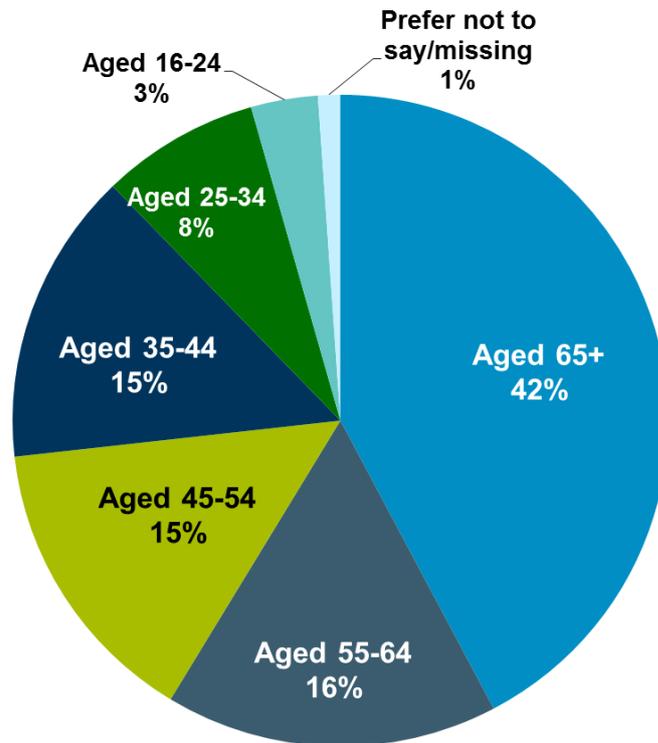
In June 2015 we carried out a survey of 1,836 current library users aged 16 and above at all libraries across East Sussex. This user survey was repeated in August/September 2015 and in December 2015. 2,034 library users were interviewed as part of this survey in August and September and 1,883 users were interviewed in December. The graphs in this section (Graphs 1-5) show the combined results for all three sets of surveys.

Graph 1 below shows who the users of East Sussex libraries are. Almost half of library users (46%) were retired people and in total 70% of users were people who were either retired, worked part time, were unemployed or were students, and who were therefore able to use libraries at different times of the day. 2% of the 70% of users were students. 16% of respondents worked full time.

Graph 1: Employment status of East Sussex library users



**Graph 2: Age of East Sussex library users (16+)**

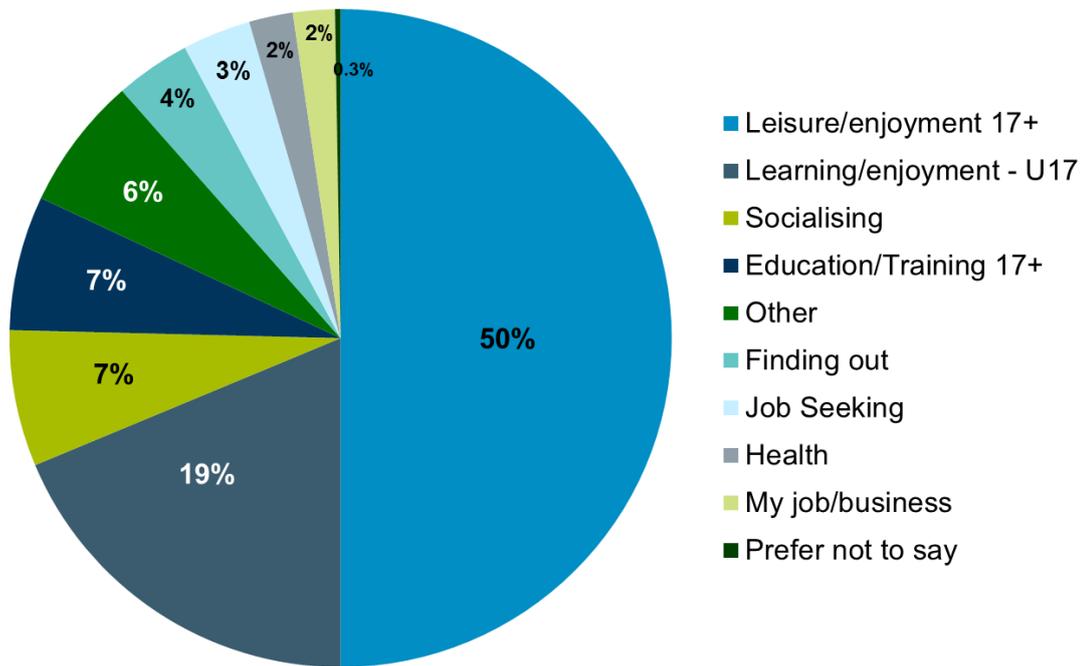


As would be expected with a large proportion of retired customers, 42% of library users were aged over 65, with almost 60% of those surveyed aged 55 or above. 38% of library users were aged between 25 and 55, and only 3% of those surveyed were under 25 years of age. It is to be expected that a small proportion of library users were under 25 in these surveys as they were aimed at people over 16. However, we know from our library management system that around 35% of active library users (those who have used the library service in the past 12 months) are children and we gathered extra information about users of the libraries who were aged under 25 in our evening users surveys, which included all age groups of users.

### Why do people use our libraries and what services do they use when they visit?

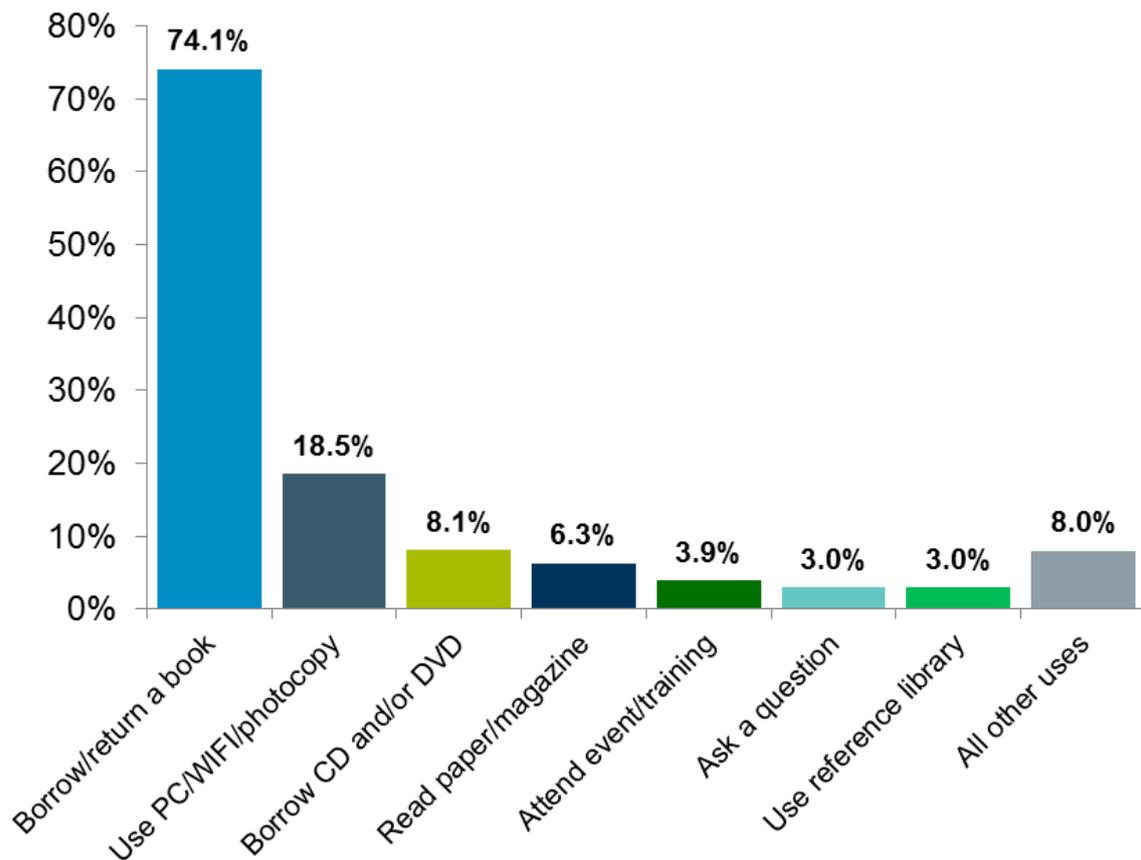
More than two thirds of people (69%) visited the library for pleasure, including visits aimed at providing leisure and enjoyment for children. A further 7% visited the library for socialising. Only 10% of visitors were using the library to help with job seeking or in connection with adult education and training. Graph 3 shows all of the reasons people visited the library.

**Graph 3: Will your visit today help with any of the following?**



In terms of the services used in the library, 74% of customers were visiting the library to borrow, return, renew or reserve a book. The next most common reason for using the library was to access the library computers or the library WiFi. A small proportion of users (8% or fewer) used the library to either borrow, return, renew or reserve a DVD or CD, to read a newspaper or magazine, or to use reference materials.

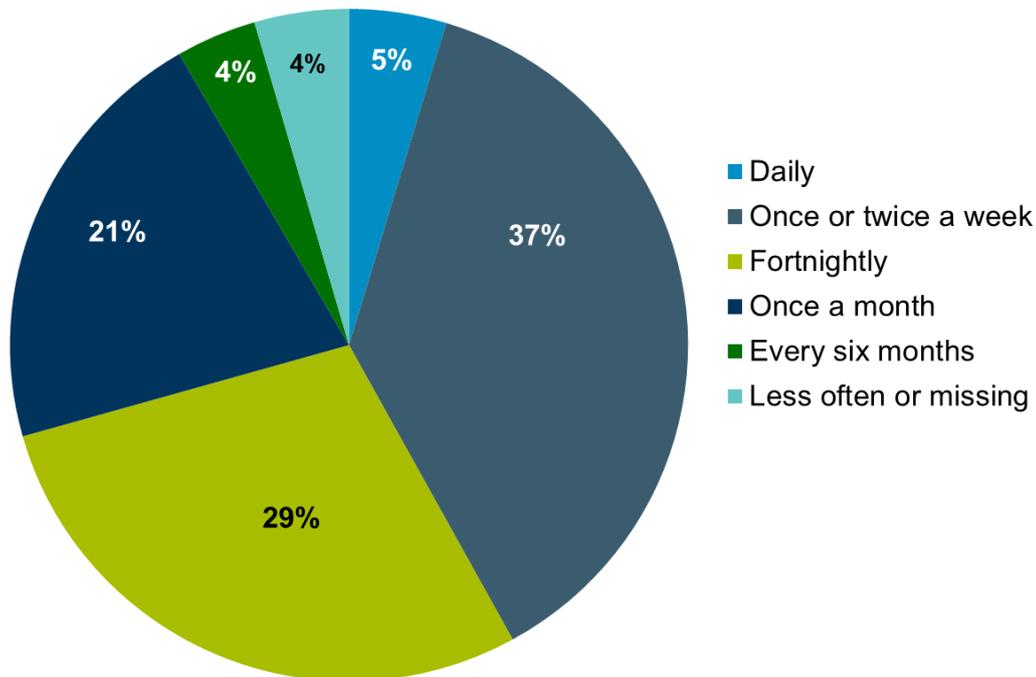
**Graph 4: What services are you planning to use today at the library?**



## How often do people visit our libraries?

Most people surveyed visited their library at least once a fortnight, with the highest frequency of visits being once or twice a week. Around one fifth of people visited the library once a month. Only 5% of users said they visited the library every day.

Graph 5: How often do you visit this library?



## What times of the day do people visit our libraries?

### Visitor counts (December 2014, May 2015 and August - December 2015)

We analysed the data from our people counters to see the times of day that people visit a sample of our libraries. These counters count the number of visitors entering the library, but do not record how long they stay.

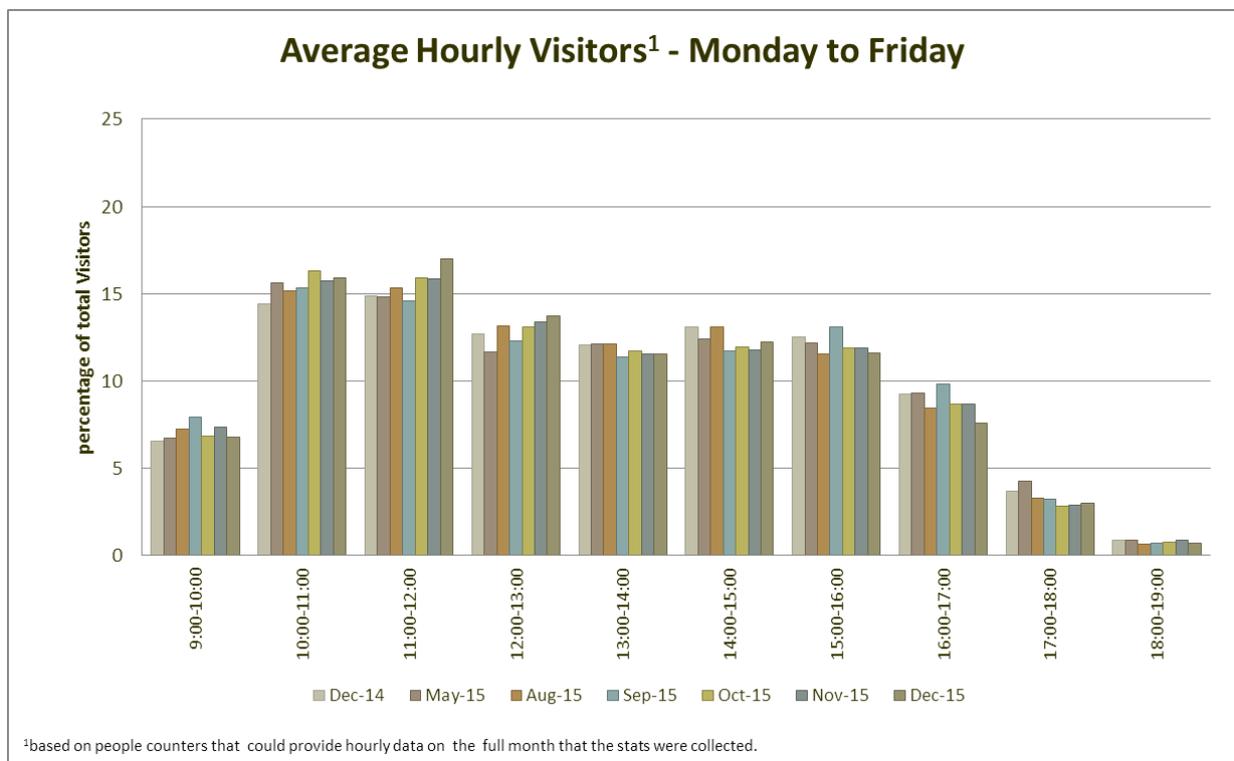
We used the people counters at Crowborough, Eastbourne, Newhaven, Seaford, Ore and Rye libraries for all of this analysis, as they have thermal imaging cameras which are accurate and can give us hourly visitor counts. In September a further five thermal imaging cameras were introduced in Bexhill, Hailsham, Langney, Lewes and Peacehaven and so we were able to analyse visitor numbers from these libraries for September to December 2015 as well. These libraries are representative of the different sizes and locations of libraries that we have. Analysis covered:

- Early morning library use before 10.00am
- 10.00am to 5.00pm (core hours)
- Late afternoon and evening use after 5.00pm

By analysing and comparing data for library usage across these seven months, we were able to compare patterns of library usage in school term time as well as during school holidays. Overall there was little seasonal variation, as can be seen in the following graphs.

The vast majority of library visits (88-90%) took place in the core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm on a weekday. Between 7-8% of visits took place before 10.00am. More than twice the number of people visit the library between 10.00am and 11.00am than between 9.00am and 10.00am on a weekday. On Saturdays twice the number of visits took place between 10.00am and 11.00am than between 09.00 and 10.00am. In terms of evening opening, only 4-5% of weekday visits were after 5.00pm. The results were similar across the seven months.

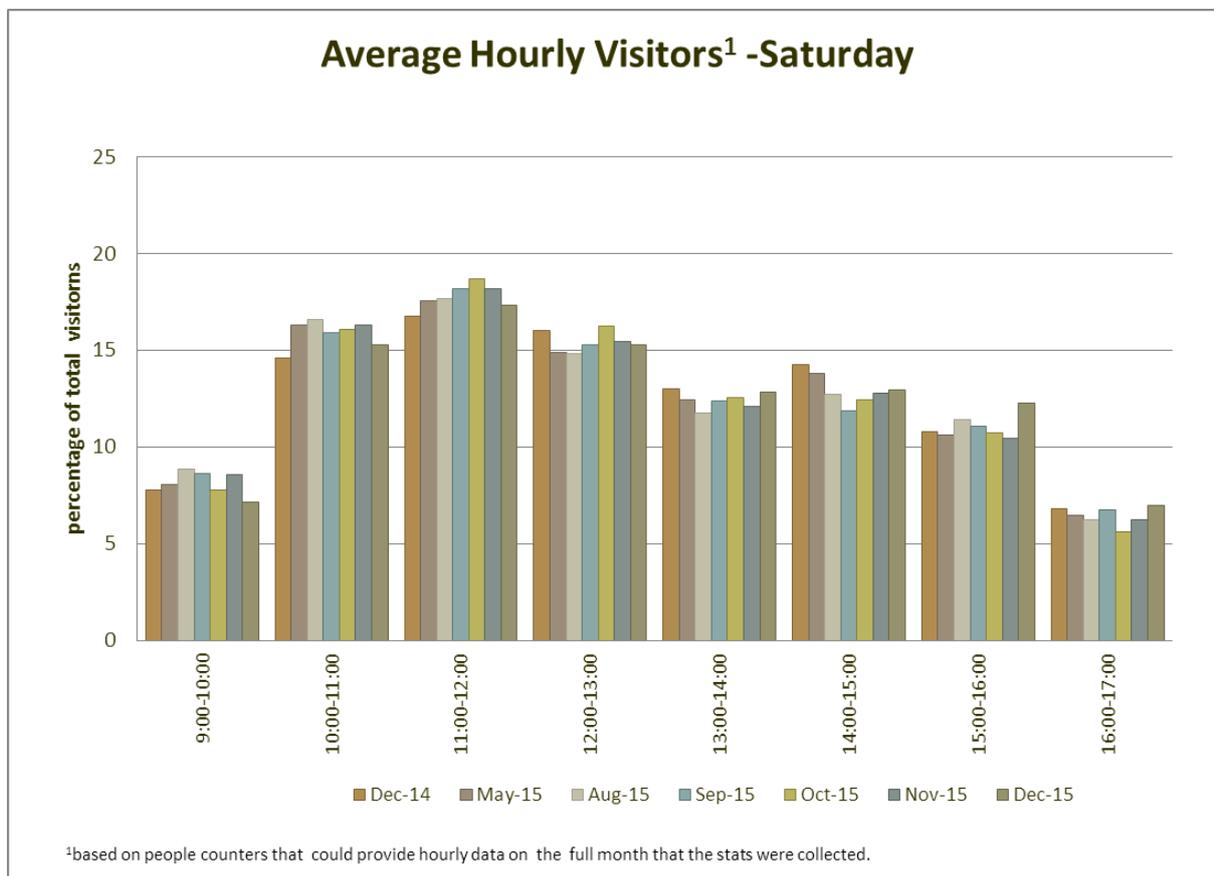
**Graph 6: Average hourly visitors on weekdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



Analysis based on those libraries with thermal imaging cameras only

On Saturdays 91-93% of visits took place between 10.00am and 5.00pm. 7-9% of visits took place before 10.00am. Libraries close no later than 5.00pm on Saturdays. Graph 7 shows the hourly breakdown of visits on Saturdays.

**Graph 7: Average hourly visitors on Saturdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



Analysis based on those libraries with thermal imaging cameras only

### What services are used at different times of day?

#### In-library transactions (December 2014, May 2015 and August - December 2015)

The impact assessment has analysed the times of the day (Monday-Friday and Saturday) when libraries are used for the key services they provide, including:

- Issuing and renewal of books and other items, including use of the self-service machines
- Use of the library computers (this is known as the People’s Network)
- Use of WiFi within libraries

This data has been taken from our library management system. As with the analysis above for the times when people visit our libraries, this analysis has also been undertaken for each weekday and Saturday for the same four week periods in December 2014, and in May, August, September, October, November and December 2015, and was again broken down

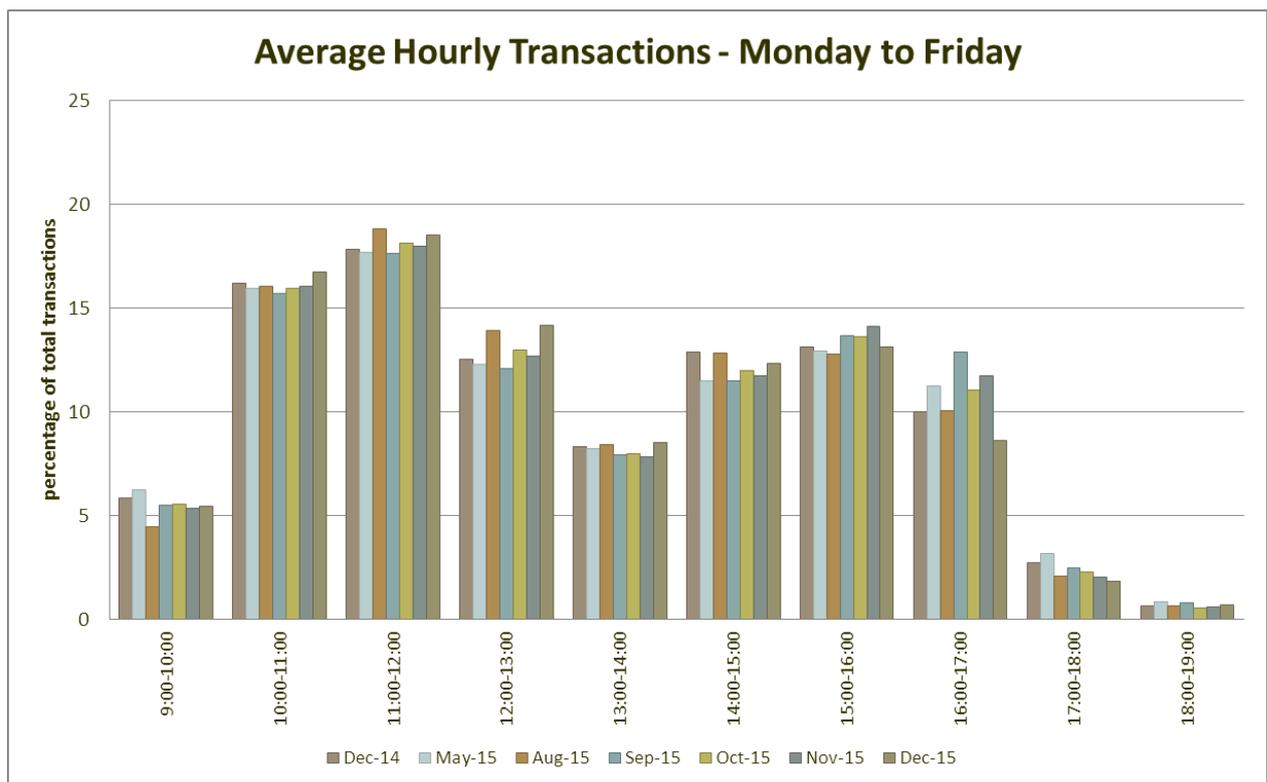
by early morning library use before 10.00am, 10.00am to 5.00pm (core hours), and late afternoon and evening use after 5.00pm. There are quite consistent patterns of usage throughout the year with little evidence of any seasonal effect.

### Issuing and renewal of books and other items

This analysis looked at the times of day when libraries are most used for the issuing and renewal of books and other items, including the use of self-service machines. We analysed the data from all of our libraries for this period. The results in Graph 8 show that between 90% and 93% of all weekday transactions of this kind take place between 10.00am and 5.00pm. This pattern was consistent over all seven months.

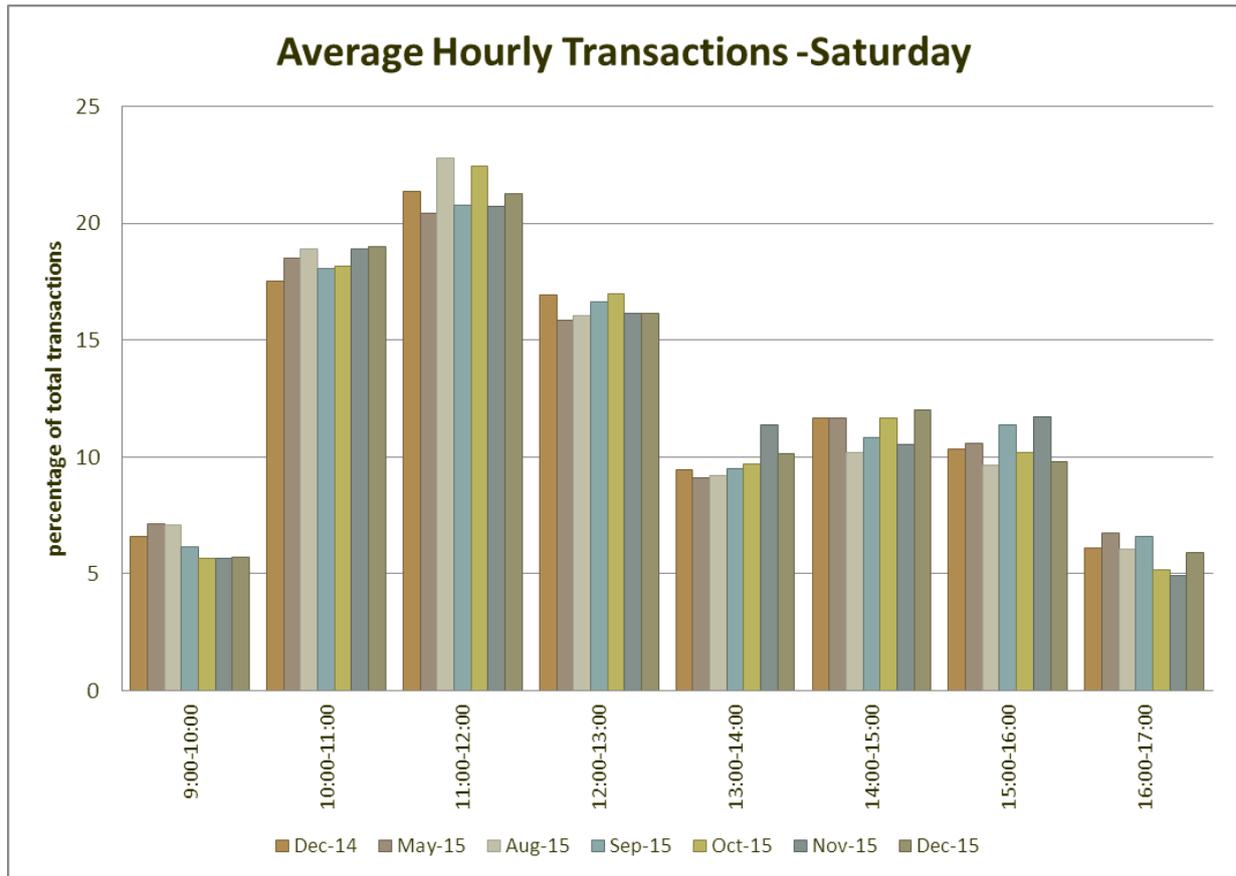
Only around 4-6% of issues and renewals are made before 10.00am and between 3% and 4% of them take place after 5.00pm. We would expect issues and renewals to be low before 10.00am as our libraries do not open until at least 9.30am. However, many libraries have opening hours until 6.00pm, 6.30pm or even 7.00pm and issues and renewals are comparatively low after 5.00pm.

**Graph 8: Average hourly countywide transactions (issues, renewals and self-service issues) on weekdays December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



Graph 9 (below) shows that on Saturdays a higher percentage of issues and renewals take place between 10.00am and 5.00pm (93-94%) than on weekdays. Again, this was very consistent across the seven months and is to be expected as libraries do not open after 5.00pm on Saturdays. Between 6% and 7% of issues and renewals were made before 10.00am on Saturdays, slightly higher than on weekdays. There is no analysis of transactions after 5.00pm on Saturdays for the reason stated above.

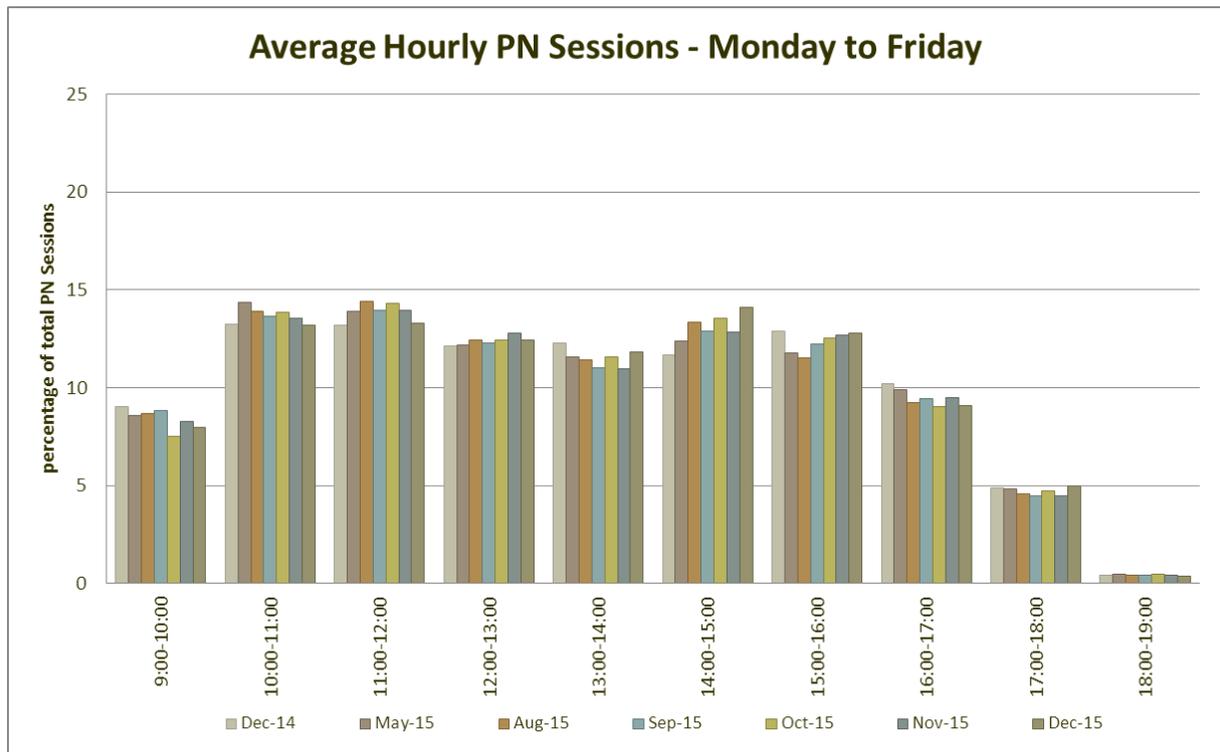
**Graph 9: Average hourly countywide transactions (issues, renewals and self-service issues) on Saturdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



## Use of library computers (the People’s Network)

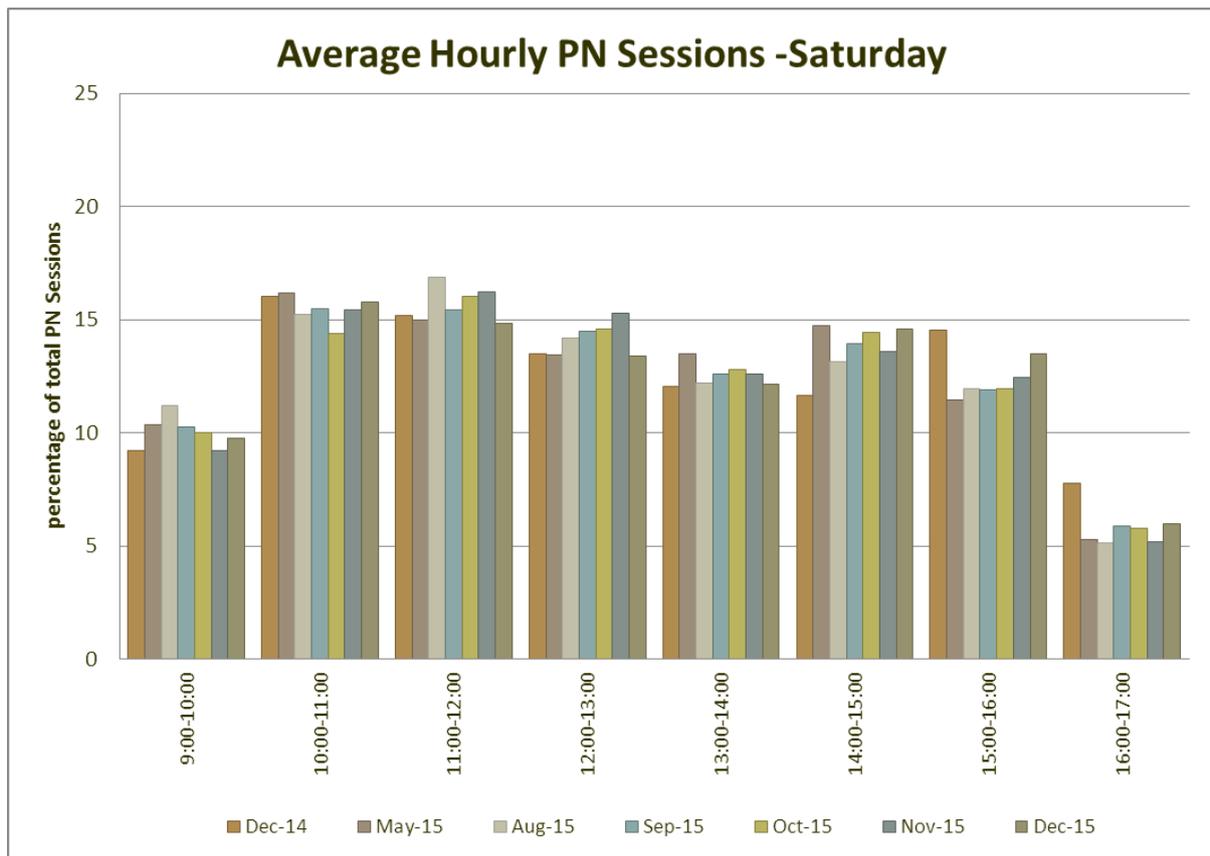
This analysis looked at the times of day when our People’s Network library computers are most used. These are the desktop computers in our libraries that the public can log onto. We analysed the data from all of our libraries over seven months. The results in Graph 10 show that between 86% and 87% of all weekday People’s Network sessions were between 10.00am and 5.00pm. This pattern was highly consistent over the seven months. Only 8-9% of People’s Network sessions were before 10.00am and between 4% and 5% of them take place after 5.00pm.

**Graph 10: Average hourly countywide People’s Network sessions on weekdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



On Saturdays, between 89% and 91% of library computer use takes place between 10.00am and 5.00pm. Between 9% and 11% of People’s Network sessions were before 10.00am on Saturdays. There is no analysis of People’s Network sessions after 5.00pm on Saturdays because none of our libraries open after 5.00pm. The hourly breakdown of results can be seen in Graph 11 below.

**Graph 11: Average hourly countywide People’s Network sessions on Saturdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**

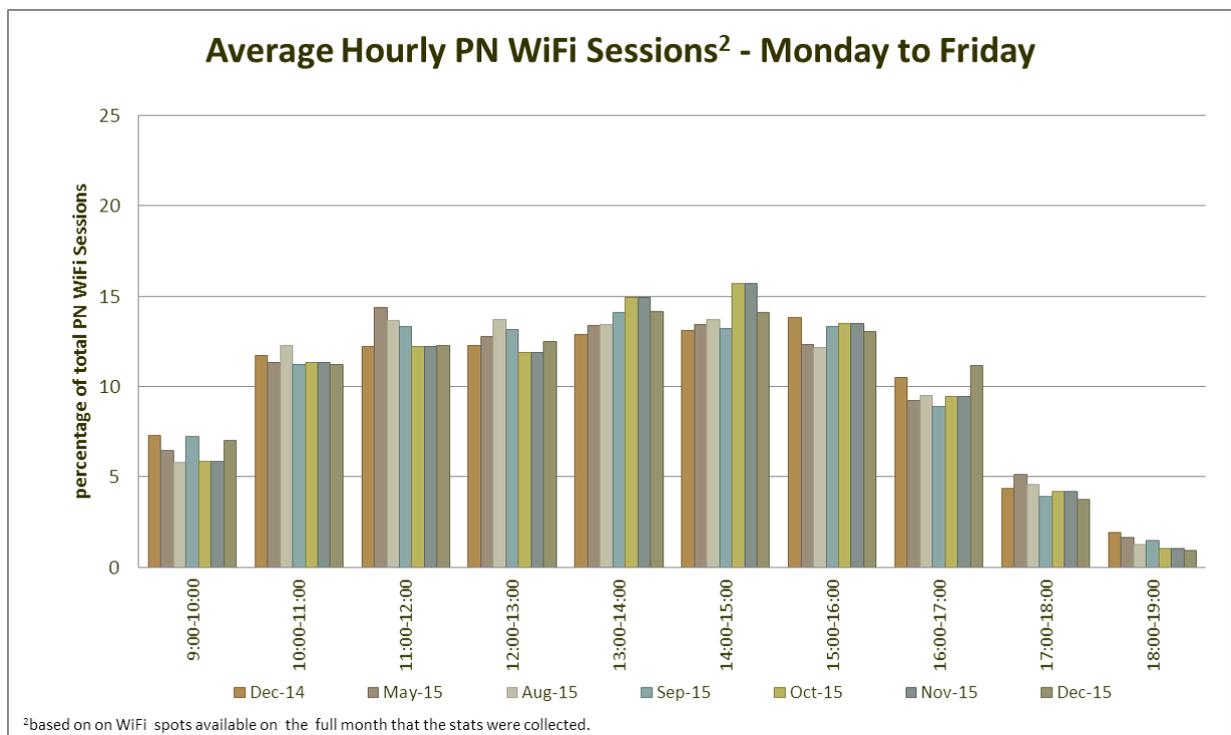


## Use of library WiFi

We have looked at patterns of WiFi usage in our libraries from Monday to Friday and on Saturdays at the libraries that had WiFi provision during all or part of the months in question. These were Bexhill, Lewes, Eastbourne, Newhaven, Seaford, Hailsham, Peacehaven and Rye. However, during the remainder of 2015 and early 2016 we have rolled out WiFi to all of the remainder of our libraries.

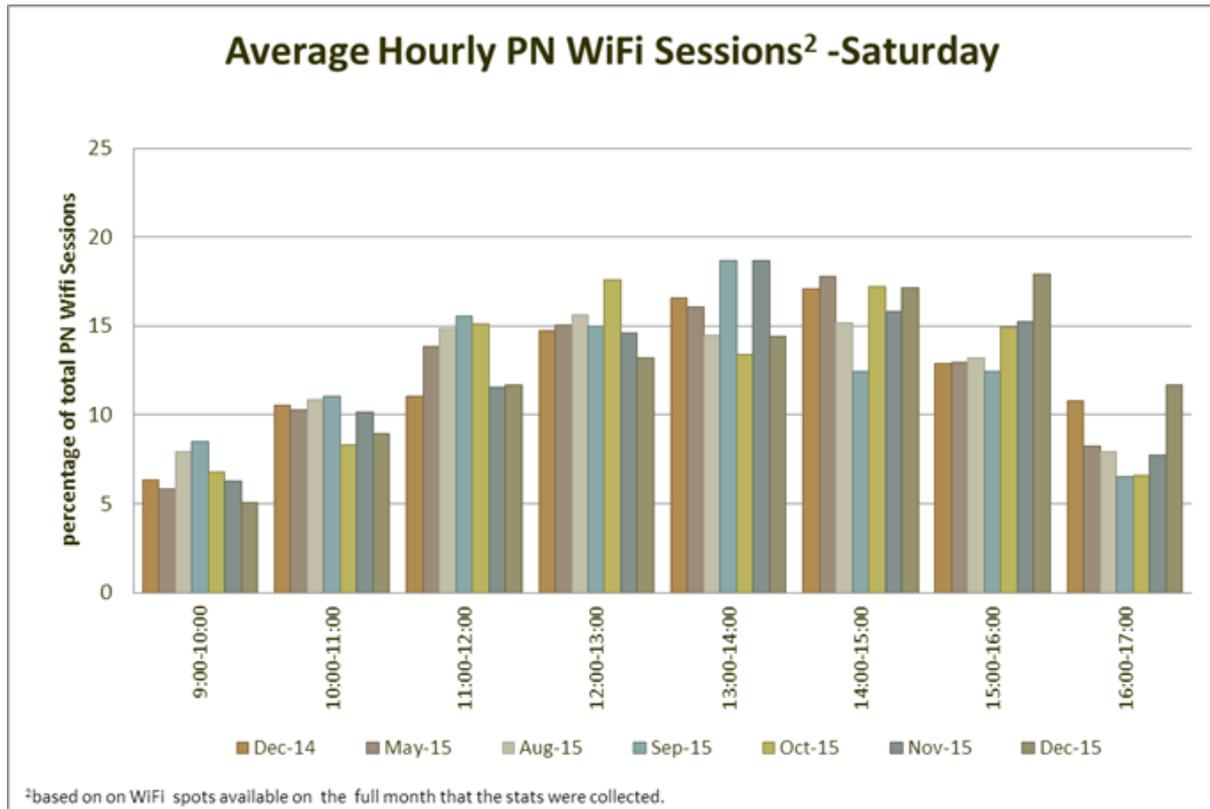
The results show that between 86% and 89% of all weekday WiFi sessions were between 10.00am and 5.00pm across the seven months we looked at. Between 6% and 7% of WiFi sessions were before 10.00am and 5-8% of them took place after 5.00pm. Graph 12 shows the hourly breakdown of usage.

**Graph 12: Average hourly WiFi sessions on weekdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



On Saturdays the results were similar to the patterns of usage for other library services, in that proportionately more WiFi sessions took place in the core period of the day. This is to be expected as libraries close no later than 5.00pm on Saturdays. The results show that 92-95% of Saturday WiFi sessions were between 10:00 and 5.00pm. There were between 5-8% of WiFi sessions before 10.00am. Graph 13 shows the hourly breakdown of WiFi usage on Saturdays.

**Graph 13: Average hourly countywide WiFi sessions on Saturdays - December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015**



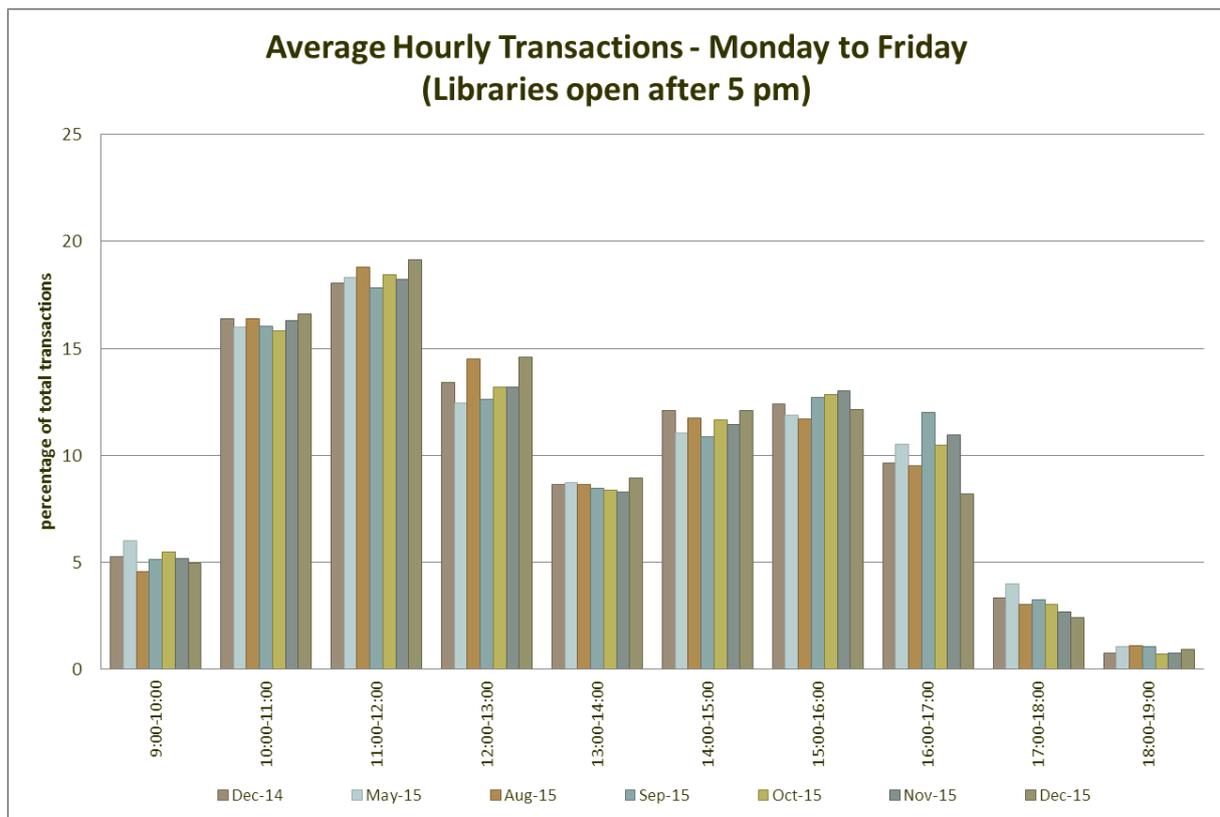
## Additional analysis of evening library usage

Because not all of our libraries open after 5.00pm, we have undertaken some separate analysis of the patterns of hourly library usage in 15 of the 16 libraries that open after 5.00pm, to compare them with patterns of usage in all libraries. We have not included data from Pevensey Bay as it has been closed for a long period of time due to flood damage. The aim of this was to see if people use libraries that open later differently, e.g. is there more use later in the day in these libraries, and therefore whether we would need to understand the impact of any differences in developing the proposals.

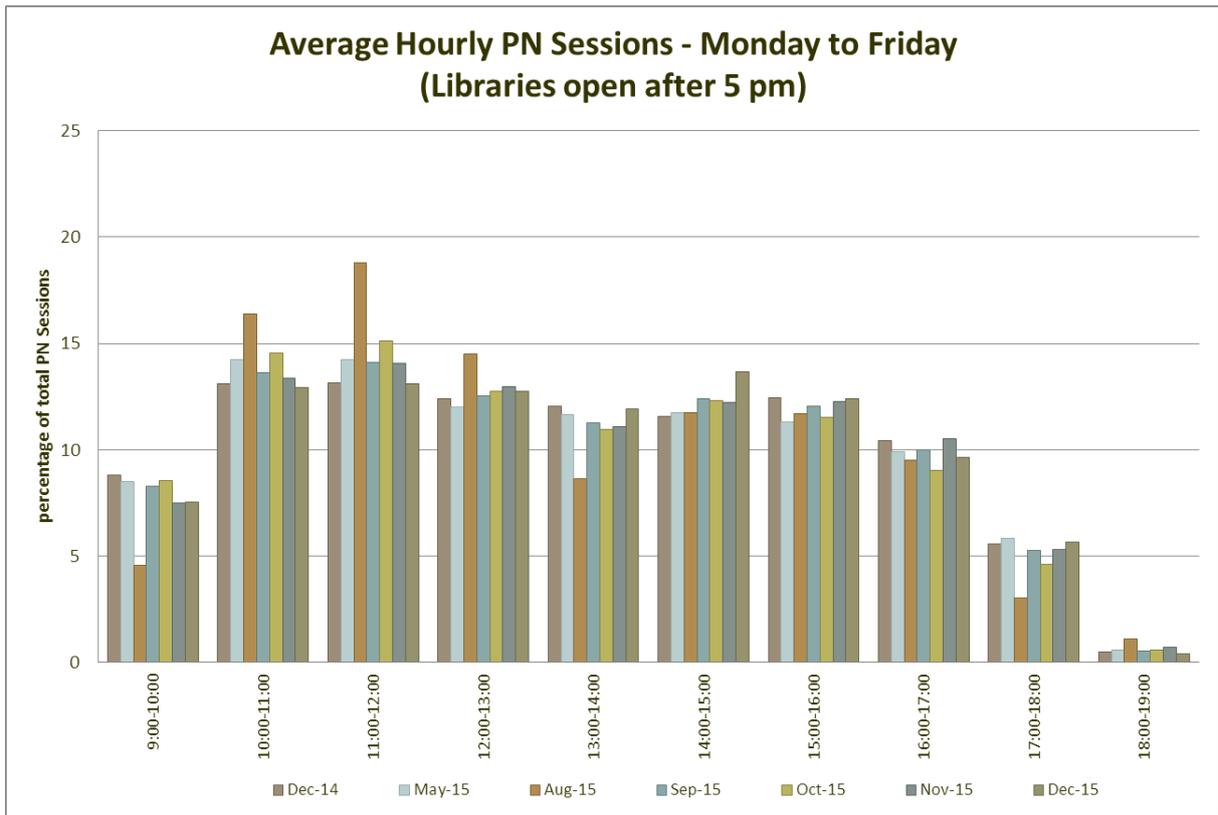
Three libraries are currently open until 5.30pm on at least one evening per week (Hollington, Polegate, Rye) and a further 12 libraries are open after 5.30pm on at least one evening per week (Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Eastbourne, Hailsham, Hastings, Heathfield, Lewes, Mayfield, Peacehaven, Ringmer and Uckfield). This analysis has also focussed on data from December 2014, May 2015 and August to December 2015.

The results of this analysis show that only 4-5% of daily transactions in these libraries are carried out after 5.00pm. Similarly, 6-8% of People's Network computer sessions and 6-8% of WiFi usage were recorded after 5.00pm. The results of this analysis are shown in the following three graphs (Graphs 14, 15 and 16). These graphs also show that there are very similar patterns of hourly library usage throughout the day in libraries that have evening opening hours compared with usage patterns in all libraries as shown in Graphs 8-13.

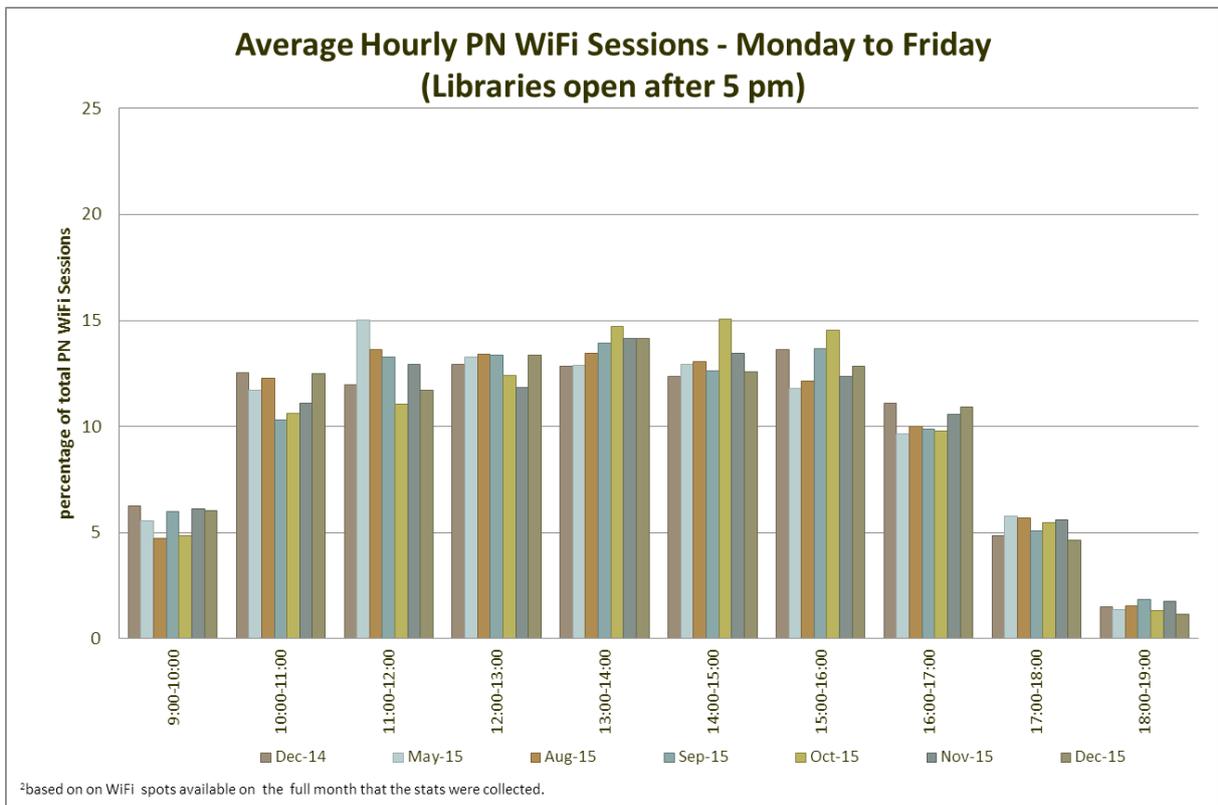
**Graph 14: Average hourly weekday transactions in libraries that remain open after 5.00pm**



**Graph 15: Average hourly PN sessions in libraries that remain open after 5.00pm**



**Graph 16: Average hourly Wifi usage in libraries that remain open after 5.00pm**



## Evening visitor count and user survey (March and April 2016)

In order to provide a comprehensive picture of who uses libraries in the evenings and what they are being used for, we commissioned further surveys at the same 15 libraries that have weekday opening beyond 5.00pm.

The surveys were scheduled for completion in the week commencing 14 March 2016 (a term-time week) and the week commencing 4 April 2016 (a school holiday week). This has provided further evidence of the potential impact of proposed changes to library opening hours in the County.

People entering the library between 4.00pm and closing time were recorded as visitors in 30 minute periods on each day that the library opened after 5.00pm. As many as possible of these visitors were then surveyed, to obtain information as to:

- Age range (including children)
- Primary purpose of visit
- Frequency of visit
- Usual timing of visits
- Employment / lifestyle group
- Home Postcode

Additionally, each interviewee was asked to view the current and proposed opening hours, and give their opinion as to whether or not they would still be able to make effective use of the library. The program covered every library *on each day* that it was open after 5.00pm in the selected weeks.

In total, 2,087 evening visitors were counted across all 15 of these libraries between 4pm and closing time across the two weeks. 1,148 users were surveyed across these two weeks, representing just under 55% of the total 2,087 visitors seen. Statistically, given the complete coverage at libraries open after 5.00pm, it is possible to state with 95% certainty that the answers given by those interviewed are within 2% of the answers for library users as a whole.

Tables 2 and 3 show the visitor counts at the individual libraries and the totals in each half hour period across all 15 surveyed libraries. There was little difference in patterns of usage throughout the evening period between the two weeks, the only noticeable difference being that there were more visitors to libraries between 4.30pm and 5.00pm during the second week (the school holidays) than there were in the March week. It should be noted that Eastbourne library was closed on Friday 8 April due to a leak. Had the library been open and a survey undertaken, the overall visitor numbers for the second week would have increased slightly.

71% of those surveyed visited at least once a fortnight, which gives us confidence that the customers spoken to were representative of regular users of the library. 67% of all visitors were seen prior to 5.00pm and 84% before 5.30pm, but clearly this is in part because several of the libraries do not open beyond this time. In cases where the library was open through to 6.30pm or 7.00pm:

- 61.3% of visitors were seen in the first hour
- 31.5% were seen in the second hour
- 7.2% were seen in the final hour.

It can be seen that the number of visitors decreases significantly during the course of the period from 4.00pm to 7.00pm. Apart from Eastbourne and Bexhill libraries, visitor numbers after 5.00pm were in single figures each day over the full two week period and in some libraries on some days no-one visited at all after 5.30pm. Across all 15 of these libraries between 6.00pm and 6.30pm there were 44 additional visitors in total in week one and 50 visitors in week two. From 6.30pm there were nine additional visitors in total in the 15 libraries in week one and seven in week two.

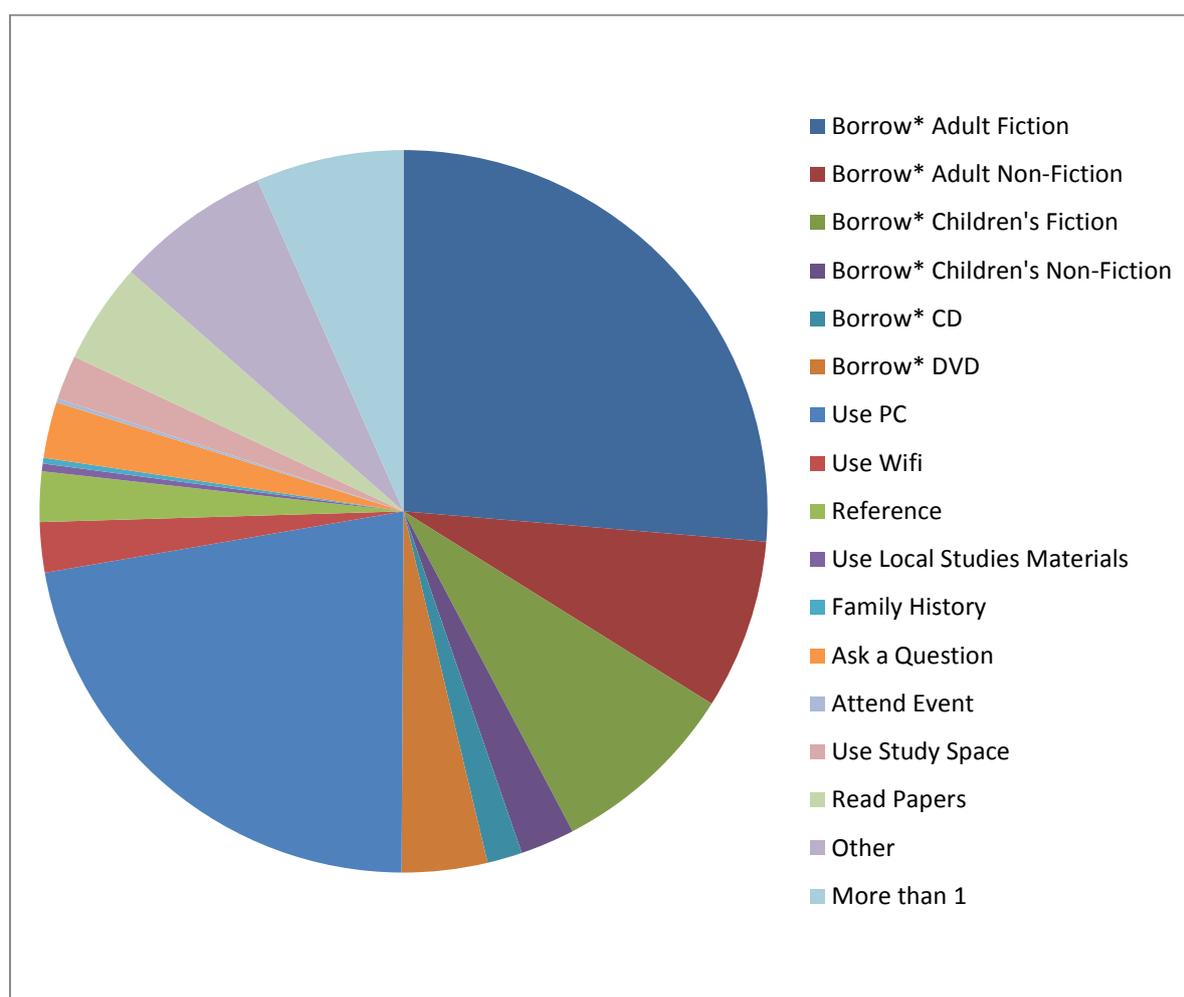
**Table 2 Evening visitors count - March 2016**

Date	Library	1600-1630h	1630-1700h	1700-1730h	1730-1800h	1800-1830h	1830-1900h
14-Mar	Crowborough	8	3	2	Closed	Closed	Closed
14-Mar	Eastbourne	5	12	9	13	5	Closed
14-Mar	Hastings	15	9	5	3	Closed	Closed
14-Mar	Lewes	15	7	7	8	3	2
14-Mar	Rye	9	10	5	Closed	Closed	Closed
14-Mar	Hollington	4	6	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Battle	11	6	1	2	2	Closed
15-Mar	Bexhill	20	15	21	7	3	Closed
15-Mar	Crowborough	7	3	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Eastbourne	11	10	8	12	5	Closed
15-Mar	Hailsham	14	4	4	3	1	0
15-Mar	Hastings	5	5	3	3	0	Closed
15-Mar	Hollington	9	1	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Mayfield	2	0	2	0	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Polegate	3	5	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Ringmer	3	2	4	4	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Rye	13	13	5	Closed	Closed	Closed
15-Mar	Uckfield	4	7	2	Closed	Closed	Closed
16-Mar	Crowborough	6	4	3	Closed	Closed	Closed
16-Mar	Eastbourne	50	15	15	12	4	Closed
16-Mar	Rye	7	5	1	Closed	Closed	Closed
16-Mar	Uckfield	9	3	1	1	2	2
17-Mar	Bexhill	13	8	8	2	0	Closed
17-Mar	Crowborough	3	8	3	0	0	0
17-Mar	Eastbourne	17	26	8	6	2	Closed
17-Mar	Hastings	7	8	6	2	1	Closed
17-Mar	Heathfield	3	4	3	3	1	2
17-Mar	Hollington	16	1	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
17-Mar	Lewes	11	10	5	7	4	1
17-Mar	Mayfield	0	2	2	0	Closed	Closed
17-Mar	Peacehaven	7	4	8	4	3	1
17-Mar	Rye	15	5	3	Closed	Closed	Closed
17-Mar	Uckfield	9	6	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
18-Mar	Battle	5	2	3	3	0	Closed
18-Mar	Bexhill	14	7	11	10	3	Closed
18-Mar	Crowborough	10	7	5	2	1	1
18-Mar	Eastbourne	6	8	12	9	3	Closed
18-Mar	Hailsham	9	4	5	2	Closed	Closed
18-Mar	Hastings	8	9	4	1	1	Closed
18-Mar	Rye	11	5	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
18-Mar	Uckfield	6	2	2	0	0	0
<b>Half hourly totals per week</b>		<b>400</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>9</b>

**Table 3 Evening visitor count – April 2016**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Library</b>	<b>1600-1630h</b>	<b>1630-1700h</b>	<b>1700-1730h</b>	<b>1730-1800h</b>	<b>1800-1830h</b>	<b>1830-1900h</b>
04-Apr	Crowborough	11	7	3	Closed	Closed	Closed
04-Apr	Eastbourne	24	36	4	14	7	Closed
04-Apr	Hastings	6	10	3	1	Closed	Closed
04-Apr	Lewes	10	9	5	6	9	1
04-Apr	Rye	7	6	5	Closed	Closed	Closed
04-Apr	Hollington	2	1	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Battle	7	2	0	3	0	Closed
05-Apr	Bexhill	38	14	12	2	1	Closed
05-Apr	Crowborough	8	9	4	Closed	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Eastbourne	6	9	9	8	6	Closed
05-Apr	Hailsham	9	12	7	0	4	0
05-Apr	Hastings	8	5	4	2	1	Closed
05-Apr	Hollington	5	2	0	Closed	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Mayfield	2	0	0	0	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Polegate	2	1	1	Closed	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Ringmer	4	4	2	1	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Rye	4	0	3	Closed	Closed	Closed
05-Apr	Uckfield	6	10	4	Closed	Closed	Closed
06-Apr	Crowborough	7	8	4	Closed	Closed	Closed
06-Apr	Eastbourne	6	9	12	10	4	Closed
06-Apr	Rye	10	7	6	Closed	Closed	Closed
06-Apr	Uckfield	13	4	3	0	0	0
07-Apr	Bexhill	9	6	5	0	0	Closed
07-Apr	Crowborough	7	12	2	0	3	2
07-Apr	Eastbourne	54	55	23	23	4	Closed
07-Apr	Hastings	12	10	4	4	1	Closed
07-Apr	Heathfield	6	4	2	4	1	2
07-Apr	Hollington	5	2	2	Closed	Closed	Closed
07-Apr	Lewes	9	12	8	4	6	2
07-Apr	Mayfield	0	8	0	1	Closed	Closed
07-Apr	Peacehaven	9	9	6	5	0	0
07-Apr	Rye	7	6	1	Closed	Closed	Closed
07-Apr	Uckfield	10	10	4	Closed	Closed	Closed
08-Apr	Battle	3	2	3	1	0	Closed
08-Apr	Bexhill	20	18	12	5	1	Closed
08-Apr	Crowborough	7	3	1	4	0	0
08-Apr	Eastbourne						Closed
08-Apr	Hailsham	8	4	2	1	Closed	Closed
08-Apr	Hastings	8	6	3	2	2	Closed
08-Apr	Rye	13	5	3	Closed	Closed	Closed
08-Apr	Uckfield	5	1	3	0	0	0
<b>Half hourly totals per week</b>		<b>387</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>7</b>

**Graph 17: Purpose of visits for evening users of libraries that remain open after 5.00pm**



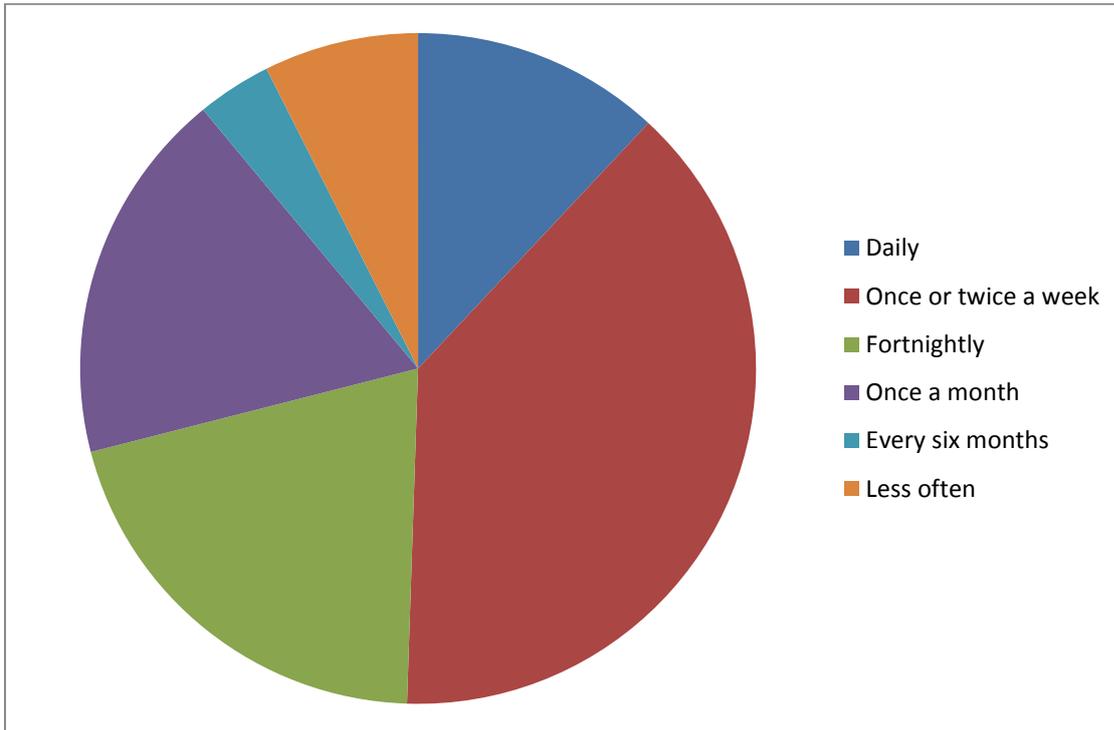
\*Borrow includes returning, renewing and reserving items

Graph 17 shows that more than half of evening users were either borrowing adult books or using PC facilities, around 75% in all either borrowing items or using PC or WiFi. Graph 18 shows the frequency with which those surveyed say they visit the library. 71% of those surveyed said they visited at least once a fortnight. However, only 12% of library users said they visited every day. The age groups most represented were age 55-64 and 65-74, who formed 41% of all those interviewed (Graph 19).

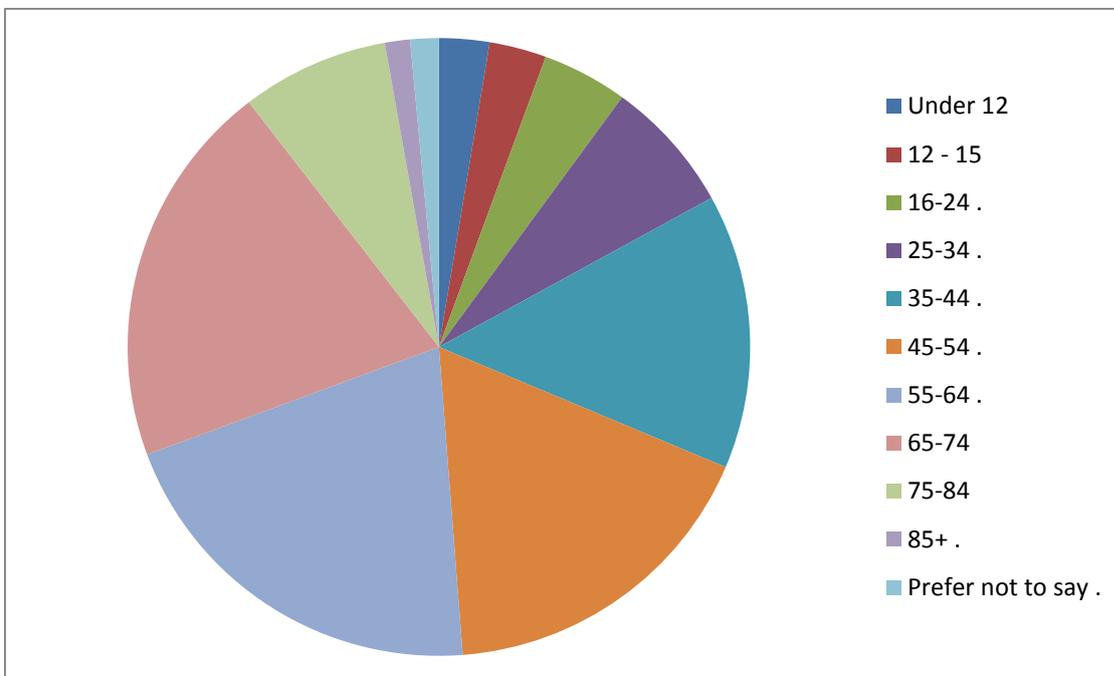
There was very little evidence that the libraries were being used as study spaces, with only 2% of evening users saying this was the main reason for their visit and in all only 5.6% of visitors interviewed were aged under 16, with 10% of those interviewed under 25. 8.5% of evening users were students (Graph 20). This does not suggest that reducing evening opening hours would have a disproportionate impact on young people using the library for homework or as a quiet study space. 61% of evening library users were either retired, unemployed, working part-time or students.

Graph 21 shows that 79% of those we interviewed said they would not be adversely affected (to the point they would be unable to use the library) by the planned changes.

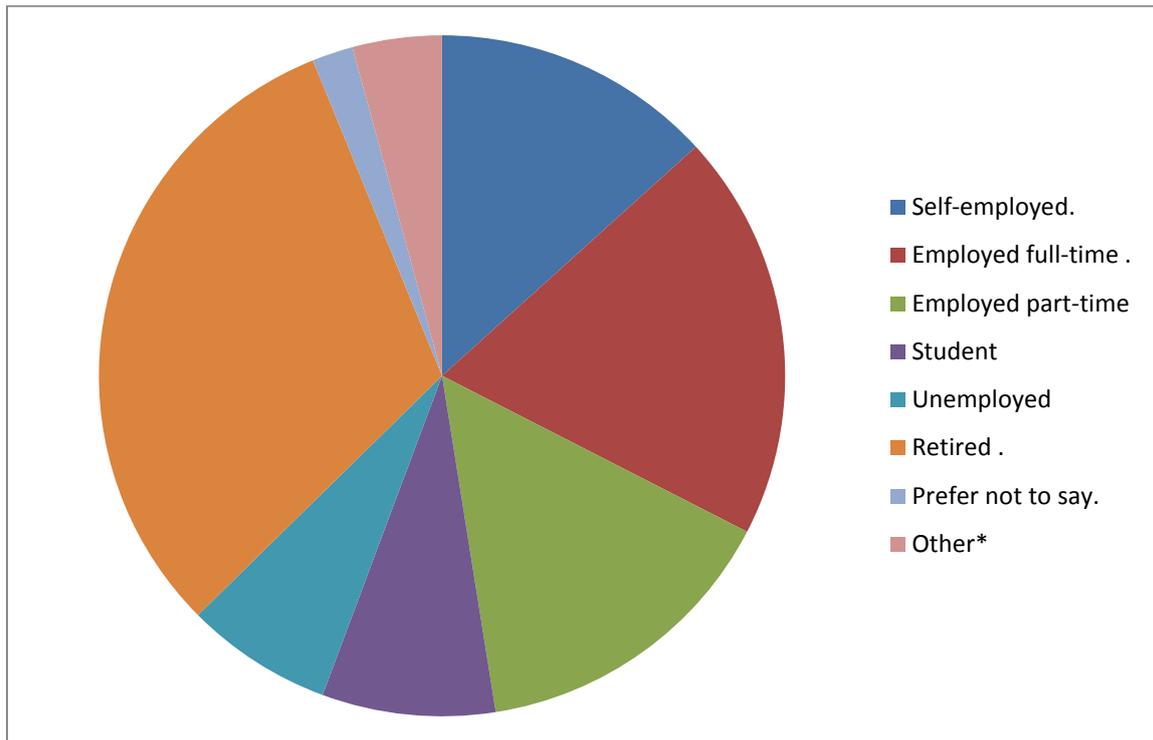
**Graph 18: Frequency of library use for evening users of libraries that remain open after 5.00pm**



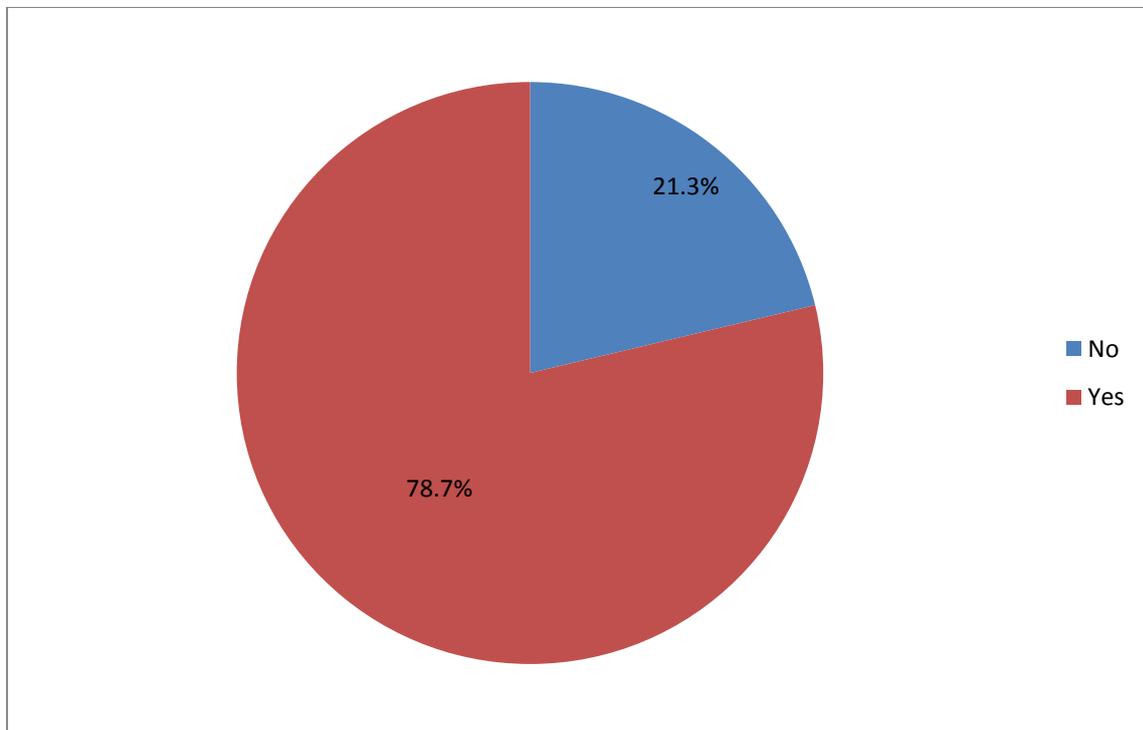
**Graph 19: Age profile of evening users of libraries that remain open after 5.00pm**



Graph 20: Employment status of evening users of libraries that remain open after 5.00pm



Graph 21: Evening users of libraries that remain open after 5.00pm saying they would still be able to use the library if the proposed changes to opening hours were implemented.



## Summary of Equality Impact Assessment of the Proposals

In addition to our statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, the Council must have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty when making decisions. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Protected characteristics are defined in the Act as age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination. East Sussex County Council also considers carers and part-time workers as additional groups and literacy and numeracy skills and rurality as factors when carrying out analysis.

To comply with the duty, the Council must have “due regard” to the three equality aims set out above. This means the PSED must be considered as a factor to consider alongside other relevant factors such as budgetary, economic and practical factors.

Following the production of a draft Equality Impact Assess (EqIA) to determine the impact of the draft opening hours proposals on equalities, a final EqIA has been produced for the amended proposals which Cabinet Members will have due regard to when they consider whether or not to approve the final proposed library opening hours.

The EqIA has carefully considered the practical impact of the proposed changes to opening hours, taking into account all of the relevant evidence that we have on who uses our libraries, and how and why they are used, so that we can properly understand what the changes would mean to people.

The EqIA finds that we are confident that we have taken reasonable steps to ensure that those groups with protected characteristics have been considered among existing library users. The EqIA identified three main groups to whom this applies: people who work full-time, children and young people who are in full-time education, and people with a disability (especially where they rely on support from another individual or particular services to access the library). Those who work full-time are the most disproportionately affected because of their limited flexibility to use the library during the core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm on weekdays. However, we know from the results of the consultation and the evening surveys that the level of impact for these groups is small.

There was very little evidence that the libraries were being used as study spaces in the evenings, with only 2% of evening users saying this was the main reason for their visit and in all only 5.6% of visitors interviewed were aged under 16 with 10% of those interviewed under 25. 8.5% of evening users were students. This does not suggest that reducing evening opening hours would have a disproportionate impact on young people using the library for homework or as a quiet study space.

Although late night library opening hours are not well used by the public, we recognise that there are still some customers who cannot easily access the library between 10.00am and 5.00pm. The proposals therefore include mitigation for the impact of reductions in library opening hours by prioritising the Thursday evening opening until 6.00pm. All libraries will open on Saturdays under these proposals, and along with those libraries that are open during lunchtime, they provide opportunities for people in full-time work or education to visit a library. We will still provide 73 hours per week of library opening across the County after 4.00pm on weekdays that will be available to all users including school children and young people and 127.5 hours of library opening on a Saturday.

The existing e-library offers library users the opportunity to access materials such as e-books, e-magazines and audio books online 24 hours a day without the need to visit the library and also to renew loans on items borrowed or place a reservation. Items can also be renewed 24 hours a day by phone using the library helpline.

Computer training and advice is provided in libraries by staff and volunteers who are able to explain to visitors how to access the e-library using the People's Network computers in libraries and using their own devices. Computer advice is available on Saturdays as well as weekdays. This training will continue to be provided.

The Home Library Service delivers books and other materials to people who cannot easily use a library due to disability or frailty. If the proposed changes are implemented, we will promote the new opening hours widely in libraries and across the County to make sure people are aware of and are able to easily remember the changes. As part of the promotion we will actively promote the expanding offer and role of the e-library and other means of accessing the library service at alternative times.

### **Other options we have considered**

This section of the draft impact assessment details the alternatives that have been considered, both in terms of measures that might be proposed instead of reducing library opening hours, and in terms of the different ways that we considered we should implement the proposed reduction in opening hours.

In addition to our duty to provide a comprehensive library service, we also have a duty to provide an efficient service. Our £2million savings plan has considered a range of measures to deliver savings. These include changes to our staffing levels and staffing structures, ways in which we could become more efficient in spending money on library stock, and the potential for savings through a Strategic Commissioning Strategy, which will provide us with a broad, long-term, strategic view of what will or might be required for our library service in the future. We believe that the balance in making savings between these different parts of the library services is right.

We aim to staff the library service in the most efficient way, with operations as cost effective as possible as part of our plans. We need to run libraries safely and efficiently, both for customers and staff. Saving more money on staffing, over and above what we have currently planned as part of the £2m savings is unlikely to be possible. In terms of library stock, we need to ensure that money we spend on books and other material is money well spent. We constantly review our spending on library stock, in line with customer need. We will continue to compare our spending on stock with other similar libraries and with our neighbouring authorities, to ensure that we are being efficient.

The Opening Hours Consultation also asked whether there were alternative proposals, other than reducing opening hours, that could help achieve the necessary savings and invited other general comments or suggestions. A total of 651 comments were received, including

suggestions for cost-cutting and income generation. A summary of the feedback received in response to these open questions is contained in Appendix 2. Some of the suggestions related to activities the LIS is already doing to cut costs or generate income. There were other useful suggestions which will be considered as part of the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy. An analysis of these suggestions and comments is provided in Appendix 2. Unfortunately it is not anticipated that the suggestions put forward would secure the level of savings required even as part of a package of measures.

We have considered whether it would be better to propose closing some of our libraries and keeping the others open for longer. A fundamental part of the development of the Strategic Commissioning Strategy is to undertake a detailed assessment of need for the service as a whole. This will provide us with a broad, long-term, strategic view of what will or might be required for our library service over perhaps the next five to ten years. The Commissioning Strategy is a detailed piece of work that needs to be comprehensive, evidence-based, and not pre-judged. For that reason it will take us around 18 months to complete. 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.

#### **4. Conclusions of the Rationale and Impact Assessment**

Over the past five years, use of the e-library and downloading of e-books has grown significantly, whilst the number of people visiting our libraries and the stock that we issue has decreased. This reflects a national trend towards increased use of digital services. Despite these changes, there were still 1.79 million visits to East Sussex libraries in 2015/16, and we have 224,300 library members.

Most visitors to our libraries still use the library for the traditional purpose of borrowing, returning, renewing or reserving a book. Access to library computers and library WiFi is also an important reason for people to visit. Much smaller proportions of users visit the library to borrow CDs and DVDs, to read newspapers and magazines, or to use reference materials.

The results of three library customer surveys in 2015 show that more than two thirds (69%) of people visited our libraries for pleasure, including visits aimed at providing leisure and enjoyment for children. A further 7% visited the library for socialising. Only 10% of visitors were using the library to help with job seeking or in connection with adult education and training.

Almost half of library users were retired people and in total 70% of users were either retired, worked part time, were unemployed, or were students. Only 16% of respondents work full time.

Most people surveyed visited their library at least once a fortnight, with the highest frequency of visits being once or twice a week. Around one fifth of people visited the library once a month. Only 5% of users said they visited the library every day.

With most library users being retired, unemployed or working part time, and the fact that 95% of customers do not use the library every day, most library users are likely to have the flexibility to visit libraries on varying days and at different times throughout the week.

Between 86% and 91% of visits to libraries, use of library computers and WiFi, and loans, renewals and returns of items take place between 10.00am – 5.00pm. The changes we are proposing will enable people to continue to use their library at varied times throughout the week from Monday to Saturday within the core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm. In addition for those libraries that are currently open later than 5.30pm, people would also be able to continue to use these on Thursday evening each week until 6.00pm, with the exception of Ringmer, where different opening hours are proposed in response to the consultation.

85% of people who responded to the question in our Opening Hours Consultation asking whether they would still have access to a library if the Council implemented the proposed new opening hours said yes and 15% of people said no. We believe this is because most library users are likely to have the flexibility as described above to visit libraries on varying days and at different times throughout the week, as services at all libraries would continue to be accessible at other times of the week.

We also know from the additional surveys we commissioned into who uses the 15 libraries that open during the evening period that the number of visitors decreases significantly during the course of the evening until closing time. Almost 80% of those we interviewed during the evening surveys (from 4.00pm onwards) said they would not be adversely affected (to the point they would be unable to use the library) by the planned changes.

We have considered carefully whether the opening hours proposals would enable us to continue to provide a comprehensive service that is accessible to all our residents by reasonable means. Based on the information above, we are of the view that it would. This

impact assessment concludes that the needs of the public that are met by using the library would still be fulfilled if we implemented the proposals and reduced opening hours by around 25% on average.

There will, of course, be impacts on some residents as a result of the proposals. We have ensured that the groups of people with protected characteristics have been considered among existing library users through the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) that we have undertaken to form part of this impact assessment. The EqIA has enabled us to identify what these impacts are likely to be, how they affect people, and what mitigation we can offer to lessen them. Impacts occur where groups of people have less flexibility than others over when they are able to visit libraries. The EqIA identified three main groups to whom this applies: people who work full-time, children and young people who are in full-time education, and people with a disability (especially where they rely on support from another individual or particular services to access the library). Those who work full-time are the most disproportionately affected because of their limited flexibility to use the library during the core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm on weekdays. However, we know from the results of the consultation and the evening surveys that the level of impact for these groups is small.

There was very little evidence that the libraries were being used as study spaces in the evenings, with only 2% of evening users saying this was the main reason for their visit and in all only 5.6% of visitors interviewed were aged under 16 with 10% of those interviewed under 25. 8.5% of evening users were students. This does not suggest that reducing evening opening hours would have a disproportionate impact on young people using the library for homework or as a quiet study space.

Although late night library opening hours are not well used by the public, we recognise that there are still some customers who cannot easily access the library between 10.00am and 5.00pm. The proposals therefore include mitigation for the impact of reductions in library opening hours by prioritising the Thursday evening opening until 6.00pm as described above. Following consultation on the draft opening hours proposals it is now proposed that Ringmer library, our only library without any current Saturday provision, would open on a Saturday. All libraries will therefore open on Saturdays under these proposals, and along with those libraries that are open during lunchtime, they provide opportunities for people in full-time work or education to visit a library. We will still provide 73 hours per week of library opening across the County after 4.00pm on weekdays that will be available to all users including school children and young people and 127.5 hours of library opening on a Saturday.

It is also important to remember that the LIS is a service that extends far beyond library buildings. The existing e-library offers library users the opportunity to access materials such as e-books, e-magazines and audio books online 24 hours a day without the need to visit the library and also to renew loans on items borrowed or place a reservation. Items can also be renewed 24 hours a day by phone using the library helpline.

Computer training and advice is provided in libraries by staff and volunteers who are able to explain to visitors how to access the e-library using the People's Network computers in libraries and using their own devices. Computer advice is available on Saturdays as well as weekdays. This training will continue to be provided.

The Home Library Service delivers books and other materials to people who cannot easily use a library due to disability or frailty. If the proposed changes are implemented, we will promote the new opening hours widely in libraries and across the County to make sure people are aware of and are able to easily remember the changes. As part of the promotion we will actively promote the expanding offer and role of the e-library and other means of accessing the library service at alternative times.

In addition to our duty to provide a comprehensive library service, we also have a duty to provide an efficient service. The changes we are proposing to make enable the County Council to save money by not opening libraries when they are least used, which also means that the impact on customers will be minimised. The proposals have been developed by analysing up-to-date data collected from our data management system on library usage, the results of recent customer surveys, and feedback from public consultation.

We considered what alternatives there are to reducing library opening hours, but have concluded that we cannot make sufficient savings from the other areas of our overall £2m savings plan. We also considered whether it would be better to propose closing some of our libraries and keeping the others open for longer. We are developing a long-term, strategic view of what needs our library service should meet over the next five to ten years via our Strategic Commissioning Strategy. This is a detailed piece of work that needs to be comprehensive, evidence-based, and not pre-judged. For that reason it will take us around 18 months to complete. 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.

In conclusion, we believe that the proposals we are putting forward to reduce library opening hours as set out in this report will have a minimal impact on library users, and where there is an impact, we have set out clearly how people can access the alternative library services that are available to them. The proposals will enable us to continue to deliver a comprehensive library service. We believe that the proposals are proportionate and fair, both in the contribution that they will make to the overall savings the County Council needs to make, and in the way that we propose to reduce opening hours at each library across the County. We think the proposals will enable us to continue to provide an efficient library service, and to make it more efficient following their implementation, because we will still be able to deliver all services within the new opening hours.