

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 21 October 2013

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Review of Library Opening Hours

Lead officer: Anthony Hopkins

Lead member: Councillor Nick Draper

Forward Plan reference number: 1296

Contact officer: Anthony Hopkins

Recommendations:

- A. To maintain current opening hours provision at five libraries (Wimbledon, Morden, Mitcham, Raynes Park and Pollards Hill).
 - B. To extend library opening hours on a Friday at Donald Hope Library and to provide some additional staff support to West Barnes Library
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report sets out plans to extend library opening hours by reviewing the way that the service operates. The Library & Heritage Service last extended its opening hours in April 2011 as part of a major service transformation. A recent Public Library User Survey (PLUS) showed an increase in satisfaction with opening hours by 9% since the reconfiguration and an overall increase with libraries of 6%. These are some of the highest satisfaction levels for libraries in London. All libraries reported an upward improvement in opening hours except Donald Hope Library that reported a 20% decrease in satisfaction.
- 1.2. Due to good organisational and financial management the library service is now in a position to provide additional support to the two least used libraries in Merton to harmonise their opening hours with other sites. The proposal is to extend library opening hours on a Friday at Donald Hope Library and to provide some additional staff support to West Barnes Library. This will be implemented within existing resources by amending staff timetables and security guard cover.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. As part of the 2011 opening hour's reconfiguration the five busiest libraries in the borough saw an increase in opening hours whilst the two least used libraries (Donald Hope and West Barnes) saw a slight decrease in opening hours. Despite a net increase in opening hours overall the Donald Hope and West Barnes reductions were challenged with the local community forming Friends Groups for both libraries.
- 2.2. In March 2011 a 3-month extension period was agreed at full Council for library opening hours to be extended at both Donald Hope and West Barnes.

This extension was added to enable the local community to consider volunteering to keep these sites open on the proposed closure days.

- 2.3. The Friends Groups for these libraries took a different approach to this challenge with the Donald Hope Friends deciding against opening the library without a staff presence and focusing on promoting the library to the local community. The West Barnes Friends committed to keep their library open on a Monday with volunteers. Both approaches have been successful.
- 2.4. The West Barnes Friends have managed to keep the library open every Monday (except for Bank Holidays) for the last two years. This is despite ongoing challenges with the recruitment of volunteers and timetabling. With officer support the Monday opening has been successful and is well received by local residents who have recorded an 8% increase in satisfaction with opening hours.
- 2.5. It is proposed that some staff support is provided to assist the volunteers at West Barnes Library on Mondays. This offer has been accepted by the Friends of West Barnes Library and ensures sustainability of services for years to come.
- 2.6. To address concerns around the opening hours at Donald Hope and with a potential new library presence in the future it is proposed to extend opening hours so that Donald Hope opens on Fridays. The library would be staffed by a security guard with some staff support and an increased voluntary presence.
- 2.7. These proposals are cost neutral and utilise existing resources. The resources to staff the extended opening hours will be pulled from reconfiguring staff timetabling and using the contingency included in the security services budget.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. **Do nothing.** Library sites would continue to remain open with the existing hours available. Whilst customers are satisfied overall with opening hours there would continue to be dissatisfaction with this arrangement at Donald Hope.
- 3.2. **Reduce opening hours.** This option enables further efficiencies to be delivered but would be unpopular amongst residents. In challenging times the Library Service has not only retained all library sites but increased opening hours, which is in stark contrast to some other authorities. Extending opening hours has the full support of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Community & Culture.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Since the Leader of the Council's announcement to extend opening hours on 30 August 2013 consultation has been undertaken with the Friends groups of the two libraries where additional resource is to be provided.

- 4.2. The Donald Hope Friends have welcomed the proposals and will be seeking to raise awareness of the new opening hours through their own communications channels.
- 4.3. The West Barnes Friends have also accepted the proposals and welcome plans for additional support to ensure the sustainability of the current opening hour's structure for years to come.
- 4.4. Consultation has also been conducted with staff groups involved and new working practices to support the changes have already been drafted.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1.

Date	Action
21 October 2013	Approval of proposed opening hours by Cabinet
November 2013	Publication of final opening hours offer
3 January 2014	Launch of new opening hours

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The proposal to extend opening hours is cost neutral as it utilises existing resources. The proposal will stretch resources but is deliverable provided that current operating levels remain in place.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Council is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service, addressing the 'needs of adults and children', according to the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964. Local authorities have a statutory duty to make provision for a library service but may decide on how this is to be done.
- 7.2. Certain aspects of the service must be provided for free including free lending of books, free access to information and free library membership. This proposal provides no risk to the statutory requirements.
- 7.3. This revision to opening hours has no impact on any legal or statutory obligations.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Extending opening hours would improve accessibility to libraries. By extending opening hours at Donald Hope Library it would mean a consistent opening hours offer for all branch libraries. See Appendix 1 for further details.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None identified for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As the proposal will stretch existing resources there will be the need at the two libraries to rely to a greater extent on self-service technology.
- 10.2. There will be occasions where lone working may need to be in place but this would only be applicable to security guards who are used to working in this environment and not library staff. Lone working risk assessments have already been drawn up and procedures are in place in preparation for the new working arrangements.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1 – Current and proposed opening hours

Appendix 1 – Current and Proposed Library Opening Hours

Current Library Opening Hours

Library	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Wimbledon	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Morden	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Mitcham	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Raynes Park	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Pollards Hill	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Donald Hope	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
West Barnes	9:30am – 7pm *	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED

**Operated solely by volunteers*

CURRENT TOTAL OPENING HOURS = 337.5

Proposed Library Opening Hours

Library	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Wimbledon	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Morden	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Mitcham	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Raynes Park	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Pollards Hill	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
Donald Hope	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED
West Barnes	9:30am – 7pm *	9:30am - 7pm	CLOSED	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 7pm	9:30am – 5pm	CLOSED

**Operated by volunteers with staff support*

PROPOSED TOTAL OPENING HOURS = 347

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