

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee- 9 May 2018

Decision No: 18/00010

Subject: Proposed Changes to Opening hours of the Archive Search Room at Kent History and Library Centre for decision

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All

**Summary:** This report updates Members on the consultation feedback on proposed changes to the opening times of the Archive search room at Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone.

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services, as shown at Appendix A on:

- (i) The decision to implement and publish revised opening hours for the archive search room at Kent History and Library Centre; and
- (ii) For the LRA service to progress to inform customers of these changes.

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) reviews its services regularly to ensure that it continues to meet customer need and demand, so that LRA resources are focussed where they are most needed. As part of this approach, LRA has reviewed the opening hours of the Archive search room at the Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone.
- 1.2 The Archive search room is where people go to view original archive documents in our collections.
- 1.3 Importantly this proposal only affects the opening times of the Archive search room not those of the wider Kent History and Library Centre.

- 1.4 Visits to the Archive search room have been in steady decline. Furthermore, whilst the Archives are a county resource not everyone can get to Maidstone easily. As a result, the service has been focussing on widening its reach digitally through initiatives like digitisation, making documents and parts of the collection available online.
- 1.5 The evidence shows that there is good use of the search room throughout most of the day, but this declines particularly after 5pm. There is also a distinct variation in usage across the weekdays with Mondays and Fridays showing the lowest levels of use.
- 1.6 The proposal was that the opening hours of the Archive search room are reduced by 15 hours a week. It is proposed that the search room is closed one day a week with the remainder of the hours reduced over the rest of the working week as shown below;

<b>Current</b>		<b>Proposed at point of consultation</b>	
Monday	9.00am to 6.00pm	Monday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Tuesday:	9.00am to 6.00pm	Tuesday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Wednesday:	9.00am to 6.00pm	Wednesday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Thursday:	9.00am to 8.00pm	Thursday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Friday:	9.00am to 6.00pm	Friday:	Closed
Saturday:	9.00am to 5.00pm	Saturday:	9.00am to 5.00pm

- 1.7 The proposal would potentially deliver £10k savings towards LRA's Medium Term Financial Plan targets for 2018/19. This will be achieved by a reduction in staffing (0.5 fte) for which the service is already holding vacancies
- 1.8 This proposal went to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee on 1 February where it was endorsed that the service progress to consultation and that the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services would consider the results of that consultation before making a final decision on the proposal.
- 1.9 This report updates on the consultation process, feedback from the results of the consultation and makes recommendations for decision.

## 2. **Consultation process:**

- 2.1 It was agreed that the consultation would focus on the Archive search room users and Archive service customers as these will be the main audience impacted by this proposal.
- 2.2 The key stakeholders identified were;
- Archive search room customers (anyone with a Library card activated for the search room)
  - Archive User Group
  - Archive customers including online

- Key Partners; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, Medway (MALSC), National Archives
  - KCC Members
- 2.3 The consultation ran for five weeks from Monday 5 February to Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The consultation was promoted via posters displayed at Kent History and Library Centre as well as online via the KCC consultation page [kent.gov.uk/archivesearchroom](http://kent.gov.uk/archivesearchroom) and the Archive service website [kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/kent-archives](http://kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/kent-archives).
- 2.4 6,075 email invites were sent to individuals and organisations who have registered via the consultation directory to receive alerts of any consultations relating to Libraries and Archives.
- 2.5 The Archives team also promoted the consultation to the identified stakeholders, including information about the consultation in the Archive newsletter that goes to all Archive customers who have signed up and included a link in each team member's email signature.
- 2.6 Staff were briefed in advance to promote the consultation and provide support to customers who needed assistance to understand the proposals and to respond.
- 2.7 All consultation material included details of how people could request alternative formats, but none were requested. An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed prior to consultation which was available as part of the consultation. Comments on this have been used to update the EqlA which will be considered, along with the rest of the consultation responses, by the Cabinet Member before making a final decision.
- 2.8 The evaluation of the consultation results was completed in-house by the LRA Customer Insight and Engagement team supported by KCC's Engagement and Consultation team. A full report into the results is included as Appendix B. A summary of the key feedback is included in sections 3 and 4 below.

### **3. Respondents to the consultation**

- 3.1 In total 109 responses were received; 105 of there were completed online with 4 being paper responses.
- 89% of the respondents were individuals
  - 4% were from professional genealogists
  - 7% were from other organisations: Dunkirk Parish Council, St Margaret's at Cliffe History Society, Ramsgate Town Council and the British Horse Society
  - 1 letter was received during the consultation which formed part of the results. This letter was replied to and the questions raised were used to produce a set of FAQs which were made available in the Archive search room and on the website.

3.2 KCC's standard 'About You', equality monitoring questions were included as part of the consultation questionnaire. The characteristics of the respondents providing this information was as follows:

- 44% Male; 51% female
- 63% over 60
- 81% White British
- 43% Christian. A further 43% said they did not regard themselves as belonging to a religion or holding a belief, and 14% preferred not to say.
- 14% people with a disability
- 9% carers

#### 4. Consultation response summary:

4.1 In terms of how respondents access the Archive Service;

- 53% use the search room at Kent History and Library Centre
- 45% access the Archive service online
- 21% don't use the service
- 7% access in other ways

Multiple responses were allowed

4.2 In terms of respondents' frequency of visits to the Archive Search room;

- 38% were occasional users (more than once a year)
- 31% were infrequent users (less than once a year)
- 20% had never used the search room
- 9% were a regular user (more than once a month)
- 2% did not know

4.3 On the key question to what extent respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes to the Archive search room opening hours the results were;

- 46% strongly agree or tend to agree
- 43% tend to disagree or strongly disagree
- 12% neither agree nor disagree

4.4 The analysis has looked at these results for those who only specifically use the Archive search room, taking out those that do not use the service or only access the service online, which gives the following result;

- 55% tend to disagree or strongly disagree
- 33% strongly agree or tend to agree
- 10% neither agree nor disagree
- 2% left blank

4.5 In terms of alternative proposals put forward 66 responders made suggestions

- 31 suggestions that we keep a late night
- 13 suggestions that we should close on Monday
- 13 suggestions that we should stay open on Friday
- 21 comments with suggestions for different opening hour arrangements which included keeping open over a run of several days, opening a bit later to accommodate a late night and suggestions for longer opening.

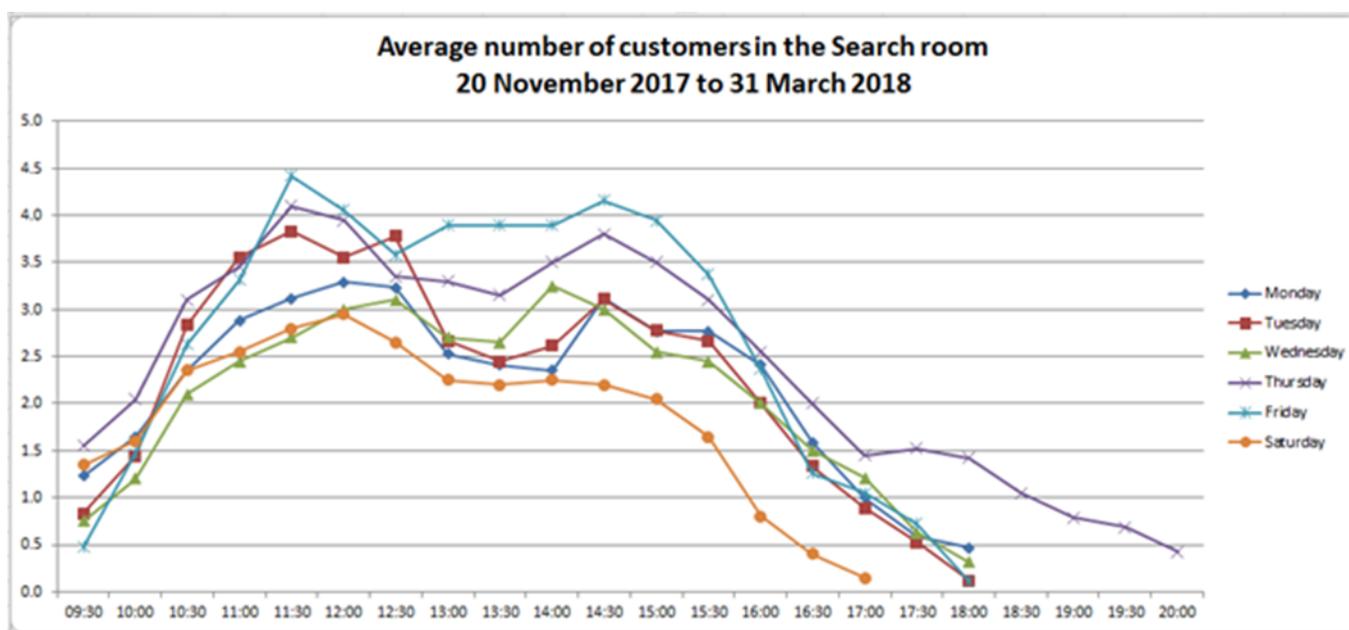
## 5. Consideration of alternative proposals

5.1 The following were all raised and considered;

**Closed Day:** The original proposal recommended Friday as the closed day based on usage and previous customer feedback that it would be better for the Kent search room to be closed on a day when other Archives were not.

Considering feedback to the consultation it is proposed that the closed day is changed and moved to Monday which on the data and evidence we have is overall the quietest day of the week. Consultee comment: “Much better if you open for 4 days in a row i.e. Tuesdays to Saturdays. Less confusing and matches what many others do”.

**Late night:** While there were a small number of responses asking for a later night opening and comments that this would disadvantage certain groups of people such as carers we have looked at the data and evidence on the hourly usage and there is no evidence to support a late-night opening as shown in the graph below. However, we will keep this under review.



**Other alternative opening hours proposals.** The different arrangement of hours put forward have been considered;

a) The change of closure day will address the comments around having consecutive days of opening towards a weekend.

b) Other arrangements of the opening hours have been rejected as the Archive service feels that our proposals represent the best range of opening possible and that this offers customers consistent opening hours each day. The other proposal for longer hours has been rejected given the need for this proposal to deliver a saving and that the data on current usage does not indicate a level of demand.

## 6. Equalities impact

6.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment has been revised as a result because of the consultation and is included as Appendix C.

## 7. Financial implications

7.1 The proposal with the changes will still deliver £10k savings towards LRA's Medium Term Financial Plan targets for 2018/19. This will be achieved by a reduction in staffing (0.5fte) for which we are already holding vacancies.

## 8. Revised proposal and recommendation

8.1 Considering the feedback from the consultation and the alternative proposals put forward the revised proposal for the new Archive Search room opening hours are;

<b>Proposed at time of Consultation</b>		<b>Proposed for decision</b>	
Monday:	9.00am to 5.00pm	Monday:	Closed
Tuesday:	9.00am to 5.00pm	Tuesday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Wednesday:	9.00am to 5.00pm	Wednesday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Thursday:	9.00am to 5.00pm	Thursday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Friday:	Closed	Friday:	9.00am to 5.00pm
Saturday:	9.00am to 5.00pm	Saturday:	9.00am to 5.00pm

8.2 It is recommended that this proposal should be implemented.

## 9. Next steps:

9.1 Customers will be notified of the decision by;

- A copy of this report, the consultation report and revised EqIA being made available in the search room and online via the Archive website, social media and the consultation directory.
- Notice of three full working weeks will be given to customers before any changes come into effect
- Revised signage and information will be put in place at Kent History and Library Centre and on our website.

## 10. Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services as shown at Appendix A on:

- (i) The decision to implement and publish revised opening hours for the archive search room at Kent History and Library Centre
- (ii) For the LRA service to progress to inform customers of these changes.

## 11. Appendices and Background Documents

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B: Full consultation evaluation report
- Appendix C: Revised Equality Impact Assessment

## 12. Report Authors:

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