

To Mr. Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Communities
By: Des Crilley, Director of Libraries, Youth, Culture and Sport
Subject: **HORSOMONDEN LIBRARY – replacement of service**
Classification: Unrestricted
File Ref:

Summary:

This reports sets out proposals to replace Horsmondens Library with alternative library service provision to meet the needs of the local community.

1. Background:

The Library is in the Primary School and in the last Ofsted Report Inspectors highlighted a serious issue. They thought that the children were at risk because adults were able to get into the school when visiting the public library. The school governors responded by asking us to limit the library opening hours to outside of school hours.

It has not been possible to find an alternative site for the library within the school.

Most of the library use is from school children and very few adults borrow books

Year	Total Issues
2001/02	5328
2002/03	6009
2003/04	7059
2004/05	5938
2005/06	4193
2006/07	Projected 3134

The changes to the opening hours have resulted in a further drop in visitors and book borrowing.

2. Policy Context

In April 2004 Cabinet endorsed the “**Library and Archive Strategy: 2004 to 2014**” this document set out the vision for Libraries and Archives and set out the broad strategy to deliver the transformed service, which commits us to:

“Provide a network of welcoming and attractive libraries which are centres for local communities, open at convenient times.”

These were key priorities for the members of the public we consulted in developing the mission and core objectives

We will provide a network of facilities that:

- are welcoming and vibrant community spaces;
- enable all our customers, current or potential, to access the full range of services, whether directly or remotely;
- are tailor made to meet the needs of the local community

The 2006/07 Business Plan for Libraries and Archives includes a target to:

Review and develop further the work already undertaken to implement a 10 year Infrastructure Plan

- Plans agreed for reviewing services in at least 16 communities

3. Process

Following full analysis of usage trends, extensive public and key stakeholder consultation was undertaken.

- A survey was sent individually to all regular users of the library, and copies were made available to the wider community in local venues.
- A Drop in discussion with local library managers was widely publicised and held on 8th July and residents were given the opportunity to look at the mobile library so that they could judge whether or not they would be happy with this as alternative library provision.
- Both the survey and the drop in session were publicized through local posters and a press release was issued, resulting in coverage in the local paper.
- The closing date for completion of the survey was 14 July 2006

There were 56 returns from the survey. This represents 1% of the catchment population, 40.5% of the registered borrowers

- 42 of the 56 would use a mobile library service
- 29 people already use other libraries
- 2 people were interested in the Home Delivery Service

41 attended the Drop-in discussion.

The service is no longer meeting the needs of the local community and does not provide value for money. KCC needs to ensure that Council Tax money is spent effectively and efficiently.

The local KCC Member, school and Parish Council have been involved in discussion from an early stage. Discussions have covered the problems raised by Ofsted and the low levels of use and everyone understands the current position.

4. Resource Implications

There are no resource implications resulting from the closure of Horsmonden Library. Any savings on premises costs will be reinvested in alternative service provision.

The impact on staff is minimal as individuals who currently work at Horsmonden are part of a pool of staff who work at libraries throughout Tunbridge Wells District. If Horsmonden Library does close they will be re-deployed at other libraries in the District. - no member of staff will be made redundant as a result of the proposed closure.

The books and other resources will be reallocated to nearby libraries.

5. Recommendation

- Close down the service offered from the existing library building.
- Handover appropriate stock to the school for use by children.
- Provide a new mobile library service and promote widely to the local community. The Mobile Library is fully accessible to wheelchair users and carries approximately 2,500 books and other items of stock. The stock is exchanged regularly.
- Provide the Home Library Delivery Service to the 2 people who have expressed an interest and promote the service to local people for whom this is the most appropriate alternative library service. This will offer customers an enhanced personal service - with books and other library items being delivered by a volunteer to the customers in their home
- Plan and implement an innovative and exciting programme of events and activities promoting reading designed to meet local needs. Make use of local venues, in partnership with the school and other community groups, for example to host a Baby Bounce and Rhyme Time Session.
- Continue to seek an alternative local community venue to host the public access computers.
- Raise public awareness of the alternative ways to access library services, focussing on the better quality of service available at the nearest libraries at Paddock Wood and Tunbridge Wells, and our wide range of remotely accessible services available through the Internet.

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Background Document:

1. Library and Archive Strategy 2004-2014