

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

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee - 1 February 2018

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

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All Divisions

Summary: Libraries, Registration and Archives has reviewed the opening hours of the Archive search room at Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone and as a result are proposing changes to the opening times for the search room subject to the outcome of public consultation.

Recommendation: Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and consider the details of this report and asked to endorse the recommendation to progress to public consultation on the proposed changes to the opening hours of the Archive search room.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Libraries, Registration and Archives reviews its services regularly to ensure that the services continue 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 and is currently open to the public between 9am to 6pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9am to 8pm Thursday and 9am to 5pm on Saturday.
- 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.

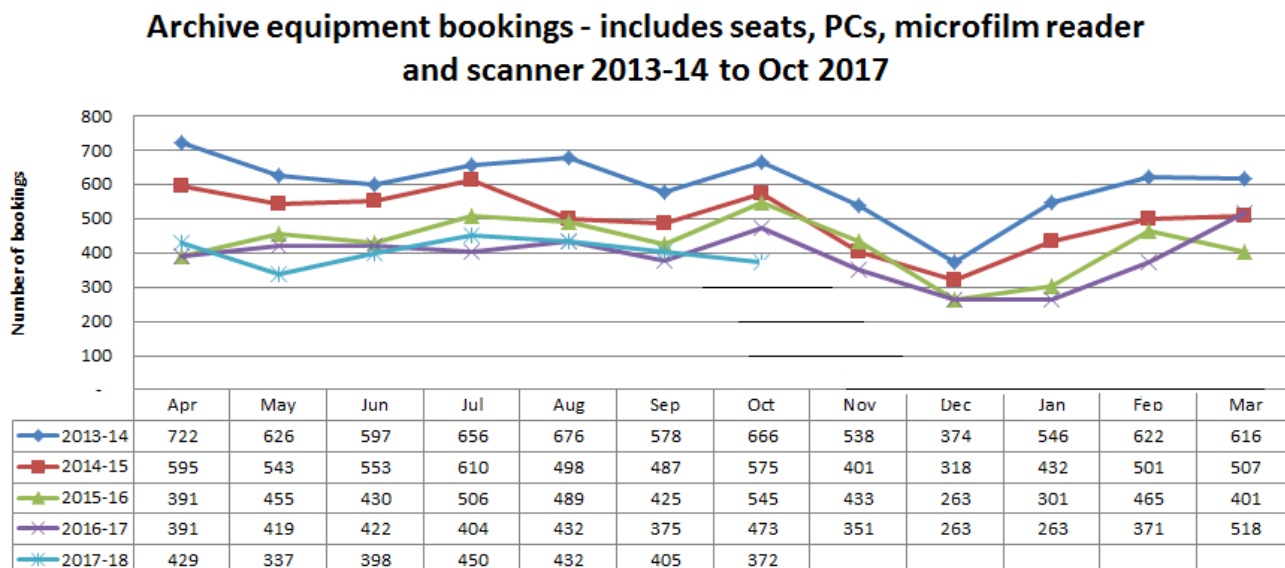
2. Evidence Used to Inform the Review

- 2.1 As shown in the tables overleaf, visits to the Archive search room have been in steady decline. Furthermore, whilst the Archives are a county resource not

everyone can easily get to Maidstone. As a result the service has been focussing on widening its reach digitally through initiatives like digitisation and making parts of the collection available online.

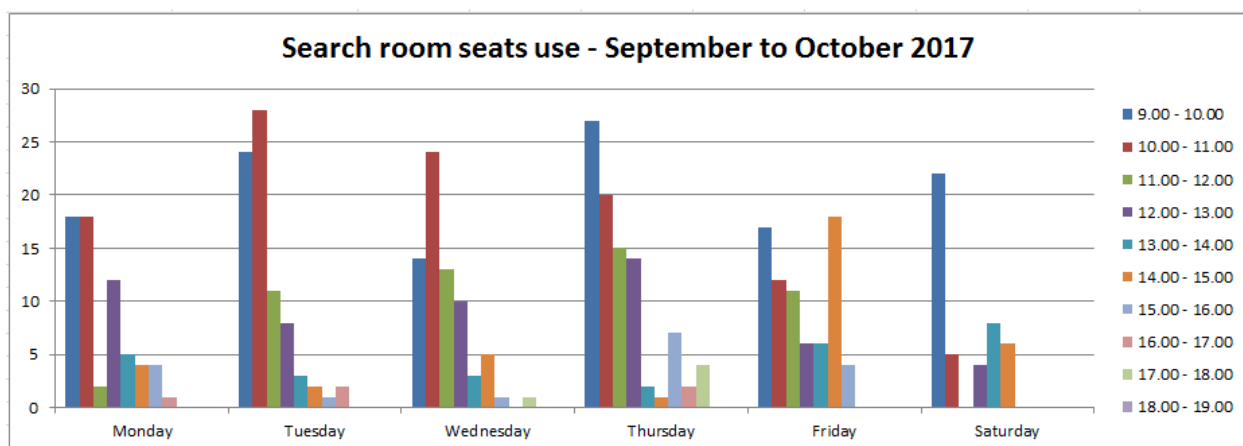
- 2.2 Table 1 below highlights the decline that has been seen year on year on the public use of the archive search room facilities.

Table 1:



- 2.3 Additionally, as customers have to book a desk in the archive search room to look at original archive material and some of the printed material, we use search room seats as a guide to measure use of the search room. Table 2 below clearly demonstrates that there is good use of the search room throughout most of the day but that 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.

Table 2:



- 2.4 In building our evidence base, we have also taken into account practice in other local Archive services and summary detail is shown below in Table 3.

Table 3 – Practice in other archive services

Archive Office	Closure day	Opening hours	Saturday opening
Medway Archive and Local History Centre	Wednesday	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9am-5pm	Saturday: 9am-4pm
Canterbury Cathedral Archives	Monday Friday	Tuesday – Thursday: 09.15 to 16.45	Saturdays – 1st Saturday of every month: 09.15 – 12.45
Essex Archive Office	Every Monday, Friday and Saturday (except for once a month)	Based on a two week Tuesday – Thursday 10.00-17.00 One week in every month Tuesday 10.00-20.00 Friday 9.00-16.00	One Saturday a month 9.00 – 16.00
Surrey History Centre	Monday	Tuesday - 9.30am to 5pm Wednesday - 10.15am to 5pm Thursday - 9.30am to 5pm Friday - 9.30am to 5pm	Saturday - 9.30am to 4pm
East Sussex The Keep	Monday	Tuesday: 9.30am – 5pm Wednesday: 9.30am – 5pm Thursday: 9.30am – 5pm Friday: 9.30am – 5pm (Reading Room closed 1-2pm)	Saturday: 9.30am – 4pm

3. Proposed Changes to Opening Hours of the Archive Search Room

- 3.1 Based on the evidence above it is proposed that the opening hours of the Archive search room be 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.

Current		Proposed	
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

- 3.2 Not opening after 5pm is proposed due to the poor usage after this time. We have selected Friday as our closed day as this is one of the less busy days of the week and we have been mindful of feedback from Archive users

previously about not being closed the same day as other nearby Archive centres. Saturday is important to enable people unable to visit during the week, through work or other reasons.

- 3.3 The day the Archive search room is closed would potentially enable the room to be used for other purposes which might include seeing the Archive team at work on the historic collections or use for specific events or class visits. Archive users have indicated that many chose not to attend events in the evening so this proposal would offer the opportunity for day time events.
- 3.4 The proposed reduction in opening hours only affects the Archive search room **not** the whole Archive service. Customers' enquiries will still be responded to and operational services will still be delivered. The Archive service online would also be available for customers to access which now includes a new online catalogue which offers much improved search functionality.

4. Proposed Public Consultation

- 4.1 It is proposed that customers are consulted on the proposed changes from Monday 5 February 2018 for five weeks. The consultation will focus on the Archive search room users and Archive service customers as these will be the main audience impacted by this proposal. The consultation will also be available online so that other interested users will have the chance to comment.
- 4.2 Following the public consultation all comments and feedback would be considered before a decision on the opening hours is taken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 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 (0.5fte) for which we are already holding vacancies.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been drafted which is included as Appendix A, and this will be included as part of the consultation material.
- 6.2 The initial findings of this EQIA highlight that this has been an evidence-based review and that with the range of opening hours proposed any adverse impact can be mitigated. Consultation will be used to further test the EQIA

conclusions and allow people to comment and raise any impacts we have not already identified.

- 6.3 The EQIA will be updated post the consultation and used to inform any final decision on the proposal.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 LRA is proposing changes to the Archive search rooms opening hours having completed an evidence led review of the usage and taking into account practice elsewhere. Alongside this the Archive service is committed to continuing to develop and grow its online services and accessibility while still focussing on delivering excellent customer services for those who visit the search room.

8. Recommendation

Recommendation:

- 8.1 Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and consider the details of this report and asked to endorse the recommendation to progress to public consultation on the proposed changes to the opening hours of the Archive search room.

9. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment

10. Report Authors:

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