

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

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To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee - 15 November 2018

Subject: Libraries, Registration and Archives Draft Strategy including Proposal for a New Library Tiering Model

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report outlines the key features of the draft Libraries, Registration and Archives strategy which includes the proposal for a new Library tiering model and revised opening hours. The paper also details the proposed public consultation process to gain feedback on the strategy and proposals.

Recommendation: Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and comment on the draft strategy and proposals for public consultation.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The Libraries, Registration and Archives Service (LRA) is a statutory and highly valued public service delivered through a network of 99 libraries, 5 Register Offices; 5 mobile libraries; an archive centre; the stock distribution and support function building at Quarrywood; the information service - 'Ask a Kent Librarian' - as well as the 24-hour accessible online services. LRA also delivers the record management service on behalf of KCC, the Prison library service in Kent and is commissioned to deliver the registration service for the London Borough of Bexley.
- 1.2 Kent County Council along with all local authorities is facing a period of unprecedented financial pressure which demands continued and sustained innovation, change and focus on positive outcomes from all services. LRA has an excellent record of meeting this challenge and has already achieved significant savings of £6million since 2013/14, this includes just under £0.9m that was delivered this financial year. A further £1m of savings is to be delivered over the next 2 financial years.
- 1.3 Alongside these financial pressures, LRA has evolved its services and now needs to continue to respond to significant changes in demography, spatial

geography, how people want to access services and their expectations of those services, technology and varying levels of IT literacy.

- 1.4 In March 2018 this Cabinet Committee endorsed the LRA ambition statements that had been informed and developed through a Member working group, LRA staff engagement, and customer and non-user market research. This report updates on the proposed strategy to deliver those ambitions and the plans for public consultation.

2. The strategy overview

- 2.1 The proposed three-year strategy sets out the priorities for the LRA service. It provides a clear direction for the service in securing a sustainable future and maximising the positive outcomes the service can deliver. The key underpinning principles of the strategy are:

- **Retain and maximise the use of our community network of buildings** - 99 libraries, archive centre and 5 register offices
- **Explore the potential for working with partners in the delivery of services**
- **Optimise library opening hours through a new library tiering model.** We have undertaken a complete review of library opening hours to reflect current use. This will see an overall reduction in Library opening hours across the county of 20% but focussed to ensure we are open at times when people use us. This will enable savings of approximately £1million.

- 2.2 The diagram below summarises the agreed five ambition statements and the associated proposals now included in the strategy:



3. Key summary of the LRA strategy

3.1 The table below details the key features of the draft LRA strategy which is included in full at Appendix A:

Ambition Outcome	Summary highlights
Everyone is Welcome	<p>Key Proposal: New marketing and promotional approach for the service. In developing the Ambitions there was consistent feedback about the need for a new approach to how we reach out and communicate the services we offer to both raise awareness and challenge perceptions. The strategy therefore includes actions to develop new branding, improve signage and explore new approaches to how we advertise and better use social media.</p> <p>LRA will build on its safe and trusted brand and ensure that the service delivers an excellent customer experience regardless of how people access the service.</p> <p>We will explore new approaches to how we engage the people of Kent in the development of our services.</p>
Enriching People's lives	<p>Key Proposal: Digital Strategy development. We will further develop our role in addressing digital exclusion by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to provide PC and Wi-Fi across all 99 libraries and pilot Wi-Fi printing • Supporting people to use digital through our network of IT buddies <p>LRA will also inspire and support people to develop skills such as coding and programming by building on the success of our digital dens and code clubs. Our e-offers will be brought together under a virtual Library and Archive brand.</p> <p>The service will continue to develop our Registration offer, promoting choice, price options and ceremonies across the county to meet customer demand. We will adapt to any changing legislation such as upcoming changes to Registration and Civil Partnership legislation.</p> <p>We will strengthen our role in providing access to trusted and credible information for all, including support for Kent businesses.</p>
Resilient and Connected Communities	<p>Key proposal: LRA as the shop window We want our services to be the first port of call for people seeking information about LRA or other services.</p> <p>Key Proposal: Maximise our community assets KCC is</p>

Ambition Outcome	Summary highlights
	<p>proud to maintain its 99 libraries and we will also work to ensure that we maximise the use of our buildings through co-locating and sharing buildings with other services.</p> <p>We will explore opportunities for partners delivering services on our behalf or where we can deliver services for others. We already have one successful partnership at Sandgate where the local Parish Council delivers the library service with us.</p> <p>We will continue to develop our archive service and build on the recent achievement of the National Archive Accreditation standard. This will see us develop a county approach for the deposit of future collections in their original digital format rather than traditional paper. We will also continue to digitise our collections to make them more widely accessible.</p> <p>LRA will develop its cultural offer and work in partnership to support the Turner Prize award coming to Kent in 2019.</p>
Sustainable and Innovative	<p>Key Proposal: Library tiering model/revised library opening hours This proposal is detailed in Section 4 below.</p> <p>In addition, we will continue to evolve the service and use proven technology to innovate. We will pilot and evaluate new approaches before rolling out more widely, with the piloting of the Library Extra scheme being a good example.</p> <p>Data and evidence will be used to adapt our service to ensure it continues to meet changing needs.</p> <p>We will continue to look at appropriate opportunities to maximise and diversify our income and keep our fees and charges under review.</p> <p>Kent is commissioned by the London Borough of Bexley to deliver its Registration service. We will also explore opportunities to deliver services for others in this way.</p>
Helping everyone to live well	<p>We will develop and promote the key role we play in supporting wellbeing by providing a space and activities for people to come together: to reduce loneliness and isolation, provide access to health information and help to give children the best start in life.</p> <p>Key Proposal: ‘Library Direct’ Our specialist services such as the mobile library, home library service, audio books by post, and residential home services will be brought together under one brand of ‘Library Direct’.</p> <p>We will maintain our mobile library service and explore the potential of different, more efficient vehicles to deliver the service.</p>

Ambition Outcome	Summary highlights
	Our home library service for those unable to access our service has been a real success and we want to explore how we widen its take-up.

4. Proposed Library Tiering Model and Opening Hours Review

- 4.1 KCC is committed to keeping the network of 99 libraries but our data, evidence and feedback from staff and customers highlights that not all of our opening times are well utilised. We have not reviewed the opening hours across all libraries for many years and opening when we are not well used is not a good use of taxpayers' money. Visits across the county declined by 4.2% last financial year and we know that our use varies across day. For example, in August this year:
- Our busiest time was between 10 am - 12 pm, accounting for 29.4% of our visits
 - Our quietest time was 5 pm - 8 pm, which accounts for 4.9% of visits
- 4.2 Instead of just introducing a general reduction in opening hours we have taken an evidence-based approach and arranged each library into one of five tiers. Essentially, a tiering model is a way of grouping libraries that share similar levels of performance. Each tier has a consistent level of opening hours applied and this shapes the number of staff, the provision of new stock, and the range of events and activities offered. This model ensures we are taking a consistent approach to optimising our resources and tailoring them to local community need.
- 4.3 This approach will help us to market libraries better and make it easier to communicate our offer to customers. Our aim is to develop better public understanding of what to expect, for example the offer at a Tier 1 'Town Plus' library will differ to the offer at a Tier 4 'Community' library. A similar approach has been taken by some retail and restaurant chains who through marketing have developed clear messaging about what customers can expect from branches of different sizes and at different locations.
- 4.4 With assistance from Strategic Commissioning's Analytics team, we compiled and analysed the following data from 2017 to shape the tiering model:

Usage	Criteria	Why have we used this data?
	Visits per hour	<p>Visits are a key measure of library use as they record everyone who comes into the library not just those who have borrowed an item or used a public computer.</p> <p>We have used 'per hour' as this is a fair way of evaluating all our libraries regardless of how many hours they are open.</p>

	Loans per hour	<p>It is important that we recognise our core role of providing access to books, DVDs, audio books etc.</p> <p>Again, we have used 'per hour' as this is a fair way of evaluating all our libraries regardless of how many hours they are open.</p>
	% unique users	There are some libraries where a lot of customers use only that library and others where people use more than one library. This covers the number of users who only use one library.
	% public computer use	IT (Information Technology) use is an important part of the modern service and we wanted to ensure this was considered.
	% of customers who attend events	Events and activities are another important part of the modern library service and reflect our role in combating social isolation.
	Building size	The size of library building will to some extent determine the level of stock and facilities that can be made available and the type and number of activities and events that can take place.

This data provides effective criteria to evaluate how people use a modern library service. The performance of our 99 libraries, our mobile libraries, outreach and online services tells us we are providing comprehensive coverage across Kent. Therefore, we are proposing not to incorporate 'need' criteria (for example, deprivation).

4.5 Based on the criteria outlined above we identified the following five tiers:

	Town Plus	Town	Community Plus	Community	Small Community
Library location	Centrally located in large highly populated towns	Centrally located in large highly populated towns, and villages	Conveniently located in small towns, villages and suburban communities	Conveniently located in villages and suburban communities	Conveniently located in smaller villages and suburban communities
Library Building	Large building often co-located with partner services	Large and medium buildings, some co-located with partner services	Medium and small buildings, some co-located with partner services	Small buildings, some co-located with partner services	Small buildings, some co-located in community and village centres.
Weekly staffed	42	37	28	23	15

	Town Plus	Town	Community Plus	Community	Small Community
opening hours					
Stock available	Large comprehensive range of adult and children's fiction and non-fiction books and DVDs for loan. Local history collection	Good range of adult and children's fiction and non-fiction books and DVDs for loan. Local history collection	Range of adult and children's fiction and non-fiction books for loan, chosen and developed to reflect local need and preferences. Some local history stock	Range of adult and children's fiction and non-fiction books for loan, chosen and developed to reflect local need and preferences. Some local history stock.	Core stock of adult and children's fiction and non-fiction books for loan, chosen and developed to reflect local need and preferences.
Access to public PCs and Wi – Fi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to information and e-resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summer Reading Challenge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community activities, such as Rhyme Time & Talk Time	✓	✓	✓ subject to volunteer availability	✓ subject to volunteer availability	✓ subject to volunteer availability

- 4.6 Our proposal includes a commitment to Saturday opening for all libraries and to maintain Sunday opening at the four libraries that currently open on this day.
- 4.7 We also propose that the model is reviewed every two years, which may result in libraries moving between tiers thereby ensuring our buildings are being used as efficiently as possible.
- 4.8 The public consultation document will set out the detail of which libraries we propose for each tier. If, following the public consultation, the decision is taken to implement this model, we will engage with local communities to shape the allocated opening hours to local need.

5. Public Consultation

- 5.1 We will consult on the draft strategy and the tiering proposal. We will engage with all current LRA customers and wider residents of Kent. Copies of the draft strategy, the consultation document providing details on the tiering proposals, questionnaire, an easy-read version and a copy of the Equality

Impact Assessments will be available in all of our buildings as well as Gateways and online.

- 5.2 The consultation will run for 10 weeks from Wednesday 21st November 2018 to Tuesday 29th January 2019. During the consultation period we will hold drop-in events at libraries across the county for people to come and talk to staff about the proposals.
- 5.3 Following the end of the consultation a full analysis and report will be completed which will come back to this Cabinet Committee. The analysis reports and updated Equality Impact Assessments will then be considered by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory services before a final decision is taken.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 Initial Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for the draft strategy and the tiering model. They have identified a number of positive and adverse impacts which are detailed in Appendix B & C. The tiering proposal and the opening hours review does impact on all protected characteristic groups. Based on the analysis to date it is concluded that there are potential effective mitigation, but we will seek public feedback on our conclusions.
- 6.2 From the consultation response, we will then update the EQIA accordingly.

7 Financial and HR Implications

- 7.1 The tiering and opening hours' changes would equate to an estimated revenue saving to KCC of up to £1million, primarily through staffing savings. There would also be potential for some building utility and running cost savings.
- 7.2 If the tiering proposal went ahead it would mean reducing the overall number of staff we employ in our libraries. This could be achieved in various ways, including, not recruiting to any vacancies, early retirement, as well as redundancies. We will do all that we can to minimise the impact on our staff who are highly valued and respected by both us and the public they assist in our libraries

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The strategy and associated tiering model offers an exciting and sustainable future for the LRA service. We will continue to offer our services across the county; we will develop our branding and marketing as well as our digital offer. We will develop further our 'Library Direct' offer whilst bringing consistency and transparency to our opening hours. A full consultation is planned which will allow our residents to comment on our proposal following which a further report will come to this Cabinet Committee.

9. Recommendation

Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and comment on the draft strategy and proposals for public consultation.

10. Background Documents

GEDCC Cabinet Committee report, 7th March 2018: Libraries, Registration and Archives Draft Ambition Statements:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=14820>

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft LRA strategy

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment for proposed LRA strategy

Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment for proposed library tiering

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