

**From:** Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

**Subject:** Decision on the Libraries, Registration and Archives Strategy including Proposal for a New Library Tiering Model

**Key Decision:** 19/00012

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Future Pathway of Paper:** For decision by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

**Electoral Division:** Whole of Kent

**Summary:** This paper summarises the results of the recent public consultation on the draft three-year Libraries, Registration and Archives Strategy and its proposal to review library opening hours through a new tiering model. It sets out changes made to the proposals as a result of the consultation and details the recommended next steps and timeline to put the proposals into effect.

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree, to adopt the 3 year strategy for Libraries, Registration and Archives and implement the proposal to tier libraries and introduce a new opening hours model across the county. Specifically to:

A) Adopt the 3 year LRA strategy subject to changes being included as outlined in this report.

B) Implement the library tiering model and progress to local engagement regarding the pattern of opening hours for each library.

C) Delegate the decision on the exact opening hours for each library to the Libraries, Registration & Archives Head of Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services.

D) Agree to a review of the tiering model on a 2-year cycle – with a report to this committee on any changes proposed.

## 1.0 Introduction

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.

## **2. Background**

2.1. The financial challenge facing Kent County Council is significant and Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) is required to make up to £1 million savings over the next two financial years. LRA has proposed a new 3-year strategy to ensure sustainability for the future and ensure the service is ready to adapt to the changing use and demand of its services. This is in line with the budget approved at County Council on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019

2.2. 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 five register offices
- Explore the potential for working with partners in the delivery of services
- Optimise library opening hours through a new library tiering model

2.3. On 15 November 2018 the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee endorsed the draft LRA strategy progressing to a public consultation.

## **3. Public consultation**

3.1. A ten-week public consultation ran from 21 November 2018 through to 29 January 2019. It was made available online via our website and paper copies were available in all Libraries, Register Offices and Gateways across the County.

3.2. The strategy was also available in the following formats:

- Accessible Word version for use with audio transcription software
- Large print
- Easy Read version
- Nepalese as this was requested during the consultation period.

3.3. The consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- Press release at the start and towards the end of the consultation
- Email/letter to key stakeholders
- Email to all library customers (173,938) who have registered their email address and given consent for LRA to contact them for promotional purposes.

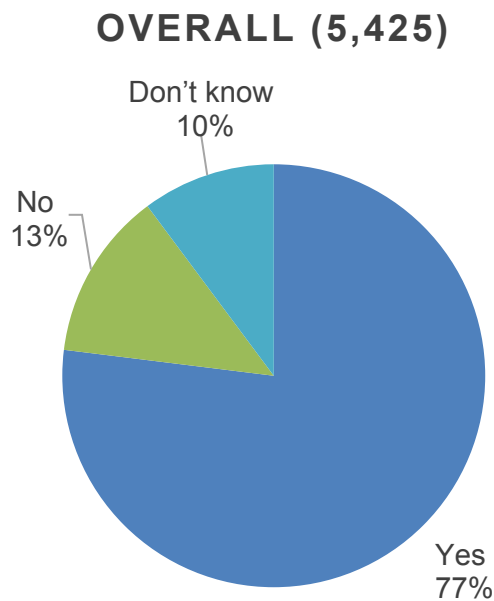
- Information on our website and through LRA and KCC social media channels
- Promoted via the LRA staff and displays in all our service points
- 20 advertised drop-in sessions at libraries across the county to raise awareness of the consultation and provide the opportunity for people to ask questions. The sessions were scheduled on different days and times to enable the most people to be able to attend.

3.4. The consultation received 5,547 responses from individuals and organisations. Not everyone answered the questions or all of them. The majority of responses at 96% were from individuals and 68% were completed online.

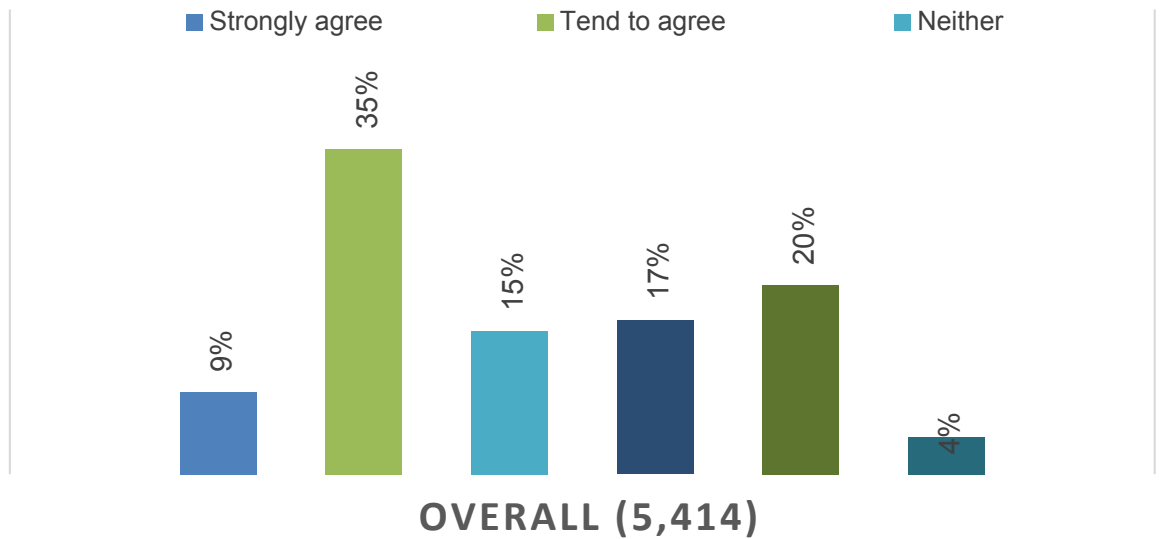
#### 4. Summary results from the public consultation

4.1. The consultation returns were analysed by an independent market research company M.E.L Research. A full evaluation report on the consultation is included as Appendix B. This also includes the full engagement record of how the consultation was promoted. Where percentages do not sum up to 100 per cent this is due to computer rounding or multiple-choice answers.

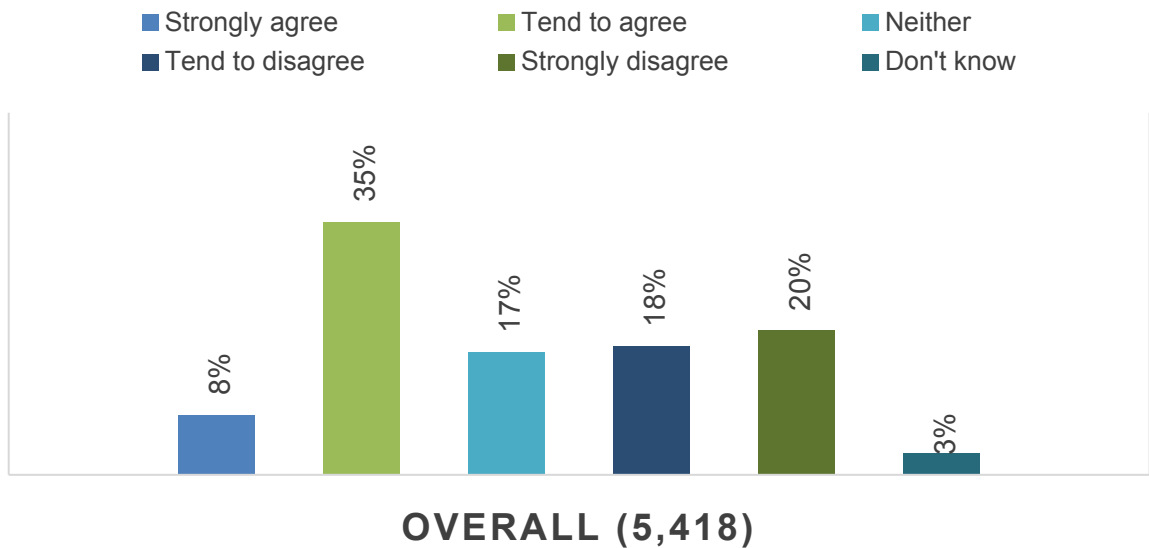
4.2. Respondents were asked to what extent they found the strategy easy to understand. Of those who answered this question 77% said they found the strategy easy to understand, 13% said no and 10% didn't know.



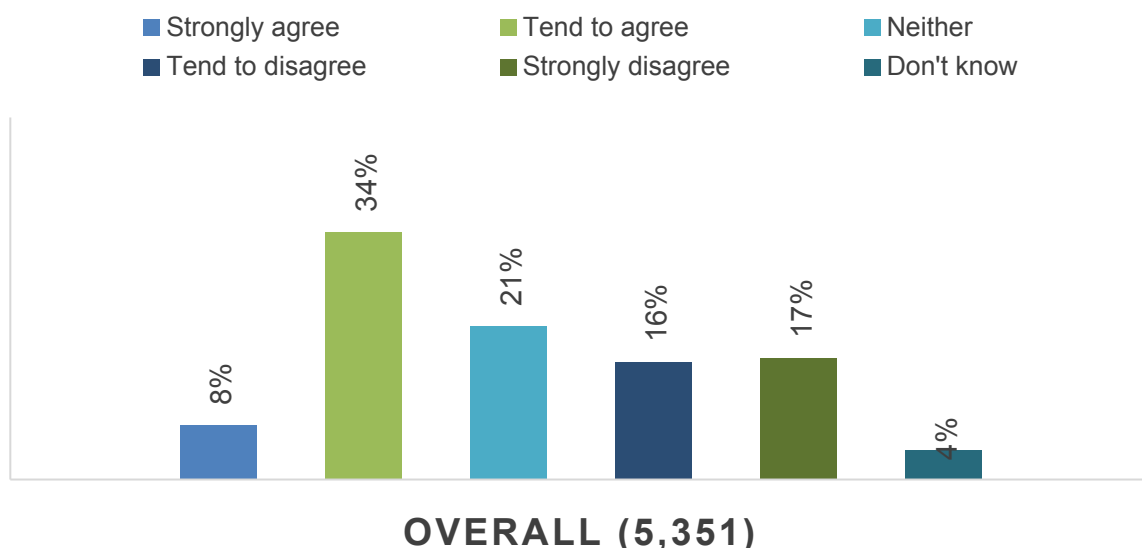
4.3. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the way forward for LRA services as described in the draft strategy. Of those who answered this question 44% tend to agree/strongly agree, 37% tend to disagree/strongly disagree with 15% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 4% didn't know.



4.4. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to tier libraries. Of those who answered this question 43% tend to agree/strongly agree, 38% tend to disagree/strongly disagree with 17% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 3% didn't know.



4.5. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed criteria to be used to tier libraries and to suggest alternative criteria for the tiering of libraries. Of those who answered this question 42% tend to agree/strongly agree, 33% tend to disagree/strongly disagree with 21% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 4% didn't know.



## 5. Proposed changes as a result of the consultation

- 5.1. Respondents offered a number of suggestions for inclusion in the strategy and these are summarised in Appendix C. Many of these points endorse or build on ideas that were included in the draft strategy and as such, will be included in the final version which will be taken through to implementation.
- 5.2. Respondents also suggested alternative criteria for the library tiering, and these are detailed in Appendix D alongside the outcomes of our considerations. From this assessment it is proposed that we review the assessment period used.
- 5.3. The original data period used for the tiering model was the full calendar year 2017 as this was the last full year available at the time of developing the model. Usage of libraries has changed in that time and as a result the service supports that the data used is updated to cover the period from October 2017 to September 2018. This is the latest last full quarter period we could use before the public consultation. This review results in the following libraries changing tiers and increasing opening hours from the original proposal:

Library	Original Tier	New Tier	New total weekly opening	Increased hours
Ash	5	4	23 hours per week	8
Cliftonville	3	2	37 hours per week	9
Dover	2	1	42 hours per week	5
Faversham	2	1	42 hours per week	5
Headcorn	4	3	28 hours per week	5
Hildenborough	5	4	23 hours per week	8
Longfield	5	4	23 hours per week	8
Newington	5	4	23 hours per week	8
Shepway	4	3	28 hours per week	5
Staplehurst	4	3	28 hours per week	5
Tenterden	3	2	37 hours per week	9
Tonbridge	2	1	42 hours per week	5

Note that all other libraries remain as proposed.

5.4. The implication of accepting this change to the 12 libraries listed is a reduction of the estimated savings from the tiering model of £90K and this will be found through further efficiencies in LRA non-staffing budgets.

5.5. Based on customer feedback we are also proposing to change the labels given to each tier from specific names to numbers 1 to 5.

## 6. Financial implications

6.1. The estimated revenue savings to the Libraries, Registration and Archives budget from the strategy is as below;

Area	Full year saving £000
Estimated tiering saving (split over two financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21)	870
Additional savings from LRA non-staffing budgets	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>960</b>

6.2. LRA were tasked with delivering a budget reduction of up to £1m over the next two years, comprising staffing (primarily) and non-staffing expenditure less a provision for early retirement and redundancy costs. The latter are estimates at this stage, until final staffing numbers are known and once the local arrangements have been agreed, with our latest modelling suggesting a net saving of £960k. This figure could differ slightly once the final tiering has been agreed and this will be monitored throughout the period.

## 7. HR implications

7.1. The implementation of the tiering model and reduction in opening hours will necessitate a reduction in the number of Customer Service Assistants/Senior Customer Service Assistants and Customer Service Officers. LRA is working with KCC's Human Resources Team about the staffing structure that will be required to deliver the revised opening hours.

7.2. Once the results of the three-week community engagement have been fully considered, a formal consultation process will begin with LRA staff and the Trade Unions. The consultation will set out the proposed staffing implication arising from the reduced library opening hours.

7.3. In order to minimise the requirement for compulsory redundancies the service has been holding vacancies and will also consider requests for voluntary redundancies/early retirement.

## 8. Legal implications

8.1. KCC has a statutory obligation "to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof" (s7 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964).

8.2. An efficient service must make best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on Council resources. Decisions about the services must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the county.

8.3 A thorough consultation process has been undertaken which has assessed the equality impact on protected characteristic groups.

## **9. Equalities implications**

9.1. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) were completed prior to consultation for the strategy and the tiering proposal. They have now been updated as a result of feedback from the public consultation.

9.2. The revised EqIAs are included as Appendix E&F. The key feedback from the consultation has highlighted the potential impacts of reduced hours on all protected characteristic groups, and particularly the young, older people, people with disabilities, and carers.

9.3. This information will shape the planned customer engagement of local opening hours and has reinforced the proposed mitigations put forward. This is in the context of keeping all of Kent's 99 libraries open, opening them to meet local demand and continuing to provide other ways to access library services.

## **10. Next Steps and timeline**

10.1 Following a decision by the Cabinet Member, we will update the public, stakeholders and staff on the results of the consultation and the decision taken.

10.2 We will plan the delivery of our strategy proposals, focussing on the five key ambition targets. Implementation plans will be devised for each ambition and implementation will include the following areas of work:

- Implement the tiering model following a three-week community engagement on the pattern of each library's opening hours. This will give residents the opportunity to let us know how and when they use their libraries to assist us in shaping and confirming the opening hours' patterns. We will ensure the changes to opening hours are clearly and fully advertised to our customers in advance and one month before the changes are introduced in the Autumn.
- Review the tiering model every 2 years, based on the criteria used in this review. Any changes will be reported to this cabinet committee.
- Progress work on a new marketing and promotional approach for LRA
- Develop LRA's digital offer including the continuation of the digitisation of Kent's Archives
- Bring our access services together into one offer under the 'Library Direct' banner. This also includes exploring the opportunity to replace our fleet of mobile libraries with smaller more efficient and reliable vehicles. The vehicles will have to be replaced in the future and LRA has a capital reserve for this purpose.

- Continue to maximise the use of our buildings, working in partnership with other KCC and wider services.
- Highlight the difference that LRA services can make across a range of agendas, but particularly around social isolation and loneliness where new initiatives like social prescribing need to be built upon for greater benefit.
- LRA will explore how it can deliver services for future new populations in the key growth areas in Kent (for example Ebbsfleet and Otterpool). We will consider new and innovative ways to deliver services and consider how these communities would want to access LRA services.
- Evaluate the Library Extra pilots, to consider potential for expansion of this service subject to full business case being approved and funding being identified.

## 11. Conclusion

- 11.1. We have now completed the public consultation and the views of the public will inform the final version of this strategy and next steps. We will now progress to implement this approach which offers a sustainable future for the LRA service.

## 12. Recommendation

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree, to adopt the 3 year strategy for Libraries, Registration and Archives and implement the proposal to tier libraries and introduce a new opening hours model across the county. Specifically to:

A) Adopt the 3 year LRA strategy subject to changes being included as outlined in this report.

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C) Delegate the decision on the exact opening hours for each library to the Libraries, Registration & Archives Head of Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services.

D) Agree to a review of the tiering model on a 2-year cycle – with a report to this committee on any changes proposed.

## 13. Background Documents

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B: Public Consultation analysis report
- Appendix C: Suggested ideas to include in the strategy
- Appendix D: Alternative library tiering selection criteria
- Appendix E: Updated Equalities Impact Assessment for the LRA strategy
- Appendix F: Updated Equalities Impact Assessment for Library tiering

## 14. Contact details



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