

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 8 March 2018

Report of the Head of Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
All

Library Opening Hours Review 2018

(Appendices 'A' –'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

This report proposes a model of banding for libraries be adopted based upon a pattern of opening hours within each library that should be implemented across all county council libraries following a countywide public consultation exercise.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No. 25 have been complied with.

Recommendation

That the proposed banding model for library opening hours set out in Appendix 'A' be adopted and implemented as early as practically possible, following a consultation period with the Trade Unions and employees.

Background and Advice

Officers in the library service have reviewed the opening hours of library buildings and propose a categorisation of all libraries into four bands of opening hours provision.

The banding allocation for each library has been identified following detailed analysis of library usage, local population need and other library service provision in the geographical area.

The proposed banding is aimed at introducing greater consistency of access to libraries across Lancashire. This system will provide better geographical coverage of late opening hours within each district council area in the county.

The proposed bandings are as follows:

Band A - open for 50 hours over six days every week (with the exception of the Harris Library in Preston which opens an additional five hours on a Sunday so that the public can use the library as well as the museum).

Band B - open for 42 hours over six days every week

Band C - open for 34 hours over five days every week

Band D – open for 18 hours over four days every week

Following Cabinet agreement on the 14 September 2017 officers undertook a comprehensive public consultation between the 2 October and 26 November 2017, the results of which are detailed in the Library opening hours consultation 2017 report (available as a background paper).

Overall, of those residents and visitors to Lancashire who chose to respond to the consultation, about three fifths of people said they will be able to use their chosen library buildings during the proposed opening hours with no problems. A further fifth said they would be able to use their chosen library but that it will be a little bit more difficult than it is now.

There was nothing in the consultation findings which suggested any objection to the concept of the implementation of a banding model across county council libraries.

There were, however, a number of areas where consultation proposals regarding opening hours clearly did not fit with the expressed requirements of local communities. In these cases, and, as far as resources will allow, the proposals have been amended to reflect the concerns of respondents to the consultation. These changes can be seen in detail in Appendix 'A'.

Consultations

A public consultation has been undertaken during which paper questionnaires were made available in the 47 county council libraries currently open and online questionnaires were available at www.lancashire.gov.uk.

Local partner organisations such as friends groups were made aware of the consultation process by local library staff and encouraged to take part.

The consultation period ran for eight weeks from 2 October until 26 November 2017. In total, 2,338 completed questionnaires were returned (1,351 paper questionnaire responses and 987 online questionnaire responses).

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

If these recommendations are not adopted the implications are as follows:

Financial

The proposed model opening hours will allow the service to implement consistent working hours thereby improving its ability to manage staff rota's effectively and deploy staff to cover leave and sickness absence as required. It is anticipated that this will lead to a small reduction in full time equivalent Library Officers and Library Assistants required, resulting in a budget saving of circa £44,000 per annum.

Reputational

Following a widely publicised consultation the county council may be perceived as not responding to the feedback from service users if the proposals in this report are not adopted.

There have been some alternative views from consultees in some areas regarding the reduction of hours at certain libraries although there has been a net gain in opening hours across Lancashire as a whole. The high number of responses we have received from Lancashire residents and visitors during the consultation period has meant that this has been a meaningful consultation resulting in a large number of amendments to the original proposals. This high level of engagement has been achieved through actively promoting the exercise via the county council's social media channels and website as well as in-branch promotion and the opportunity for people to respond both online and, if preferred, on paper.

Personnel

If the recommendations in this report are agreed, there will be a need to amend the library establishment, the impact on current employees will be related to contractual working hours, working (rota) pattern and in two cases a change of location. There will need to be consultation about these changes with the Trade Unions and the employees who work in the affected libraries. There is the potential for some of these changes to be considered significant by the current employees, however there is no reduction in the numbers of posts and there will therefore be a post that can be offered to all of the current employee group that are affected by these proposals. It is proposed to undertake a four week employee consultation period and subject to the outcome of this consultation, the target for implementation of the new structure and new opening hours will be 1 July 2018. The normal County Council workforce agreements will apply in terms of managing the changes.

Equality and Cohesion

A full Equality Analysis has been carried out and this is Appendix B of this report. The analysis concludes that the service does not consider that there will be any substantial detriment to groups of people with protected characteristics if the proposals as they have been revised and are being recommended are accepted. The service has made a number of changes following the consultation exercise, taking into account views expressed by various groups including those with protected characteristics.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
A revised strategy for Lancashire's libraries 2016-21		Julie Bell, Head of Libraries, Museums, Culture and Registrars
Consultation of library opening hours – Have Your Say questionnaire	October/November 2017	Steve Lloyd Tel: 07876 452678 Gareth Jones Tel: 01772 534007,
Library opening hours consultation 2017 report		Steve Lloyd Tel: 07876452678 Gareth Jones Tel: 01772 534007
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		