SUTTON'S FUTURE

SUTTON'S LIBRARY SERVICE CONSULTATION

Summary

As part of the Sutton's Future programme, which is looking at ways in which savings could be made to the Council's budget, a consultation was carried out to get residents' views on the 6 potential ways of making savings from the libraries budget set out in the report to the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on 17 September 2015:
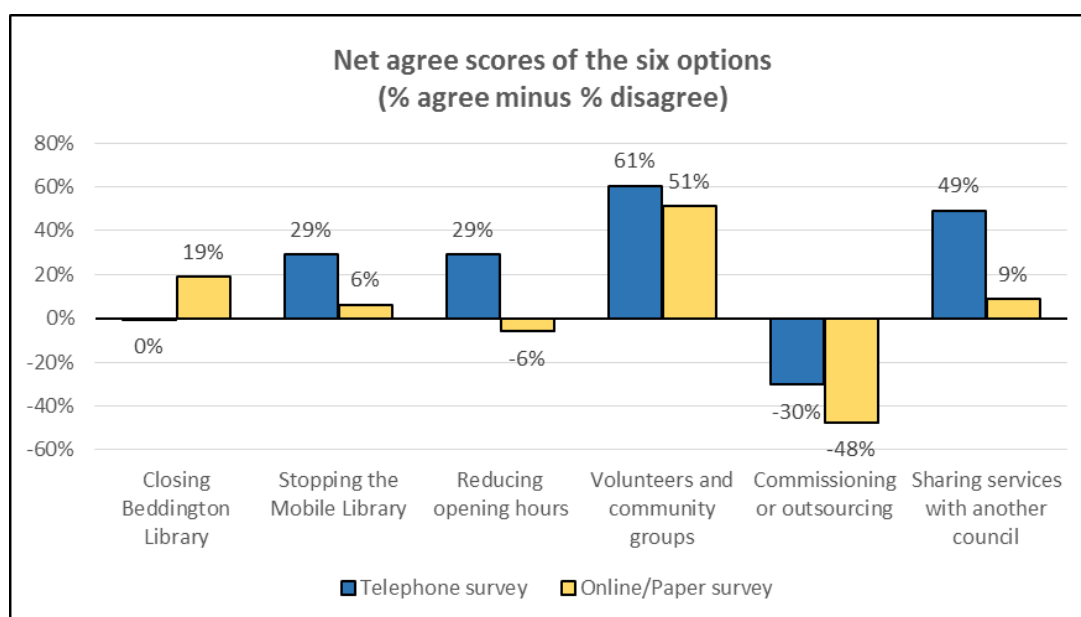
- Closing Beddington Library;
- Stopping the Mobile Library;
- Reducing opening hours in branch libraries;
- Making more use of community groups and volunteers;
- Commissioning or outsourcing the library service; and
- Sharing the library service with another Council.

Residents and library users could get involved with the consultation through: a telephone survey; completing an online or paper questionnaire; and/or attending an open public meeting on 14 November to discuss the options.

In total, nearly 3,000 people took part in the consultation: 1,000 in the telephone survey and nearly 2,000 through the online/paper survey.

The telephone survey gathered the views of a representative sample of Sutton's residents, including those who do not use the library service (who made up over 40% of that group). The online/paper survey was completed predominantly by library users.

The graph below shows, for the telephone and online/paper surveys, the 'net agree' scores for each of the options i.e. the % of people agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal minus the % of people disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Net agree scores of the six options
(% agree minus % disagree)

	Telephone survey	Online/Paper survey
Closing Beddington Library	0%	19%
Stopping the Mobile Library	29%	6%
Reducing opening hours	29%	-6%
Volunteers and community groups	61%	51%
Commissioning or outsourcing	-30%	-48%
Sharing services with another council	49%	9%

Overall, there was some support for each of the 6 options apart from 'commissioning or outsourcing' which was consistently viewed negatively across both surveys.

Making more use of volunteers and community groups was the option which had the most support in both the telephone and online/paper surveys. In both surveys, people who supported the option thought that the best way of doing that would be through a 'community supported library, which would be Council-led with paid staff but with significant support from volunteers'.
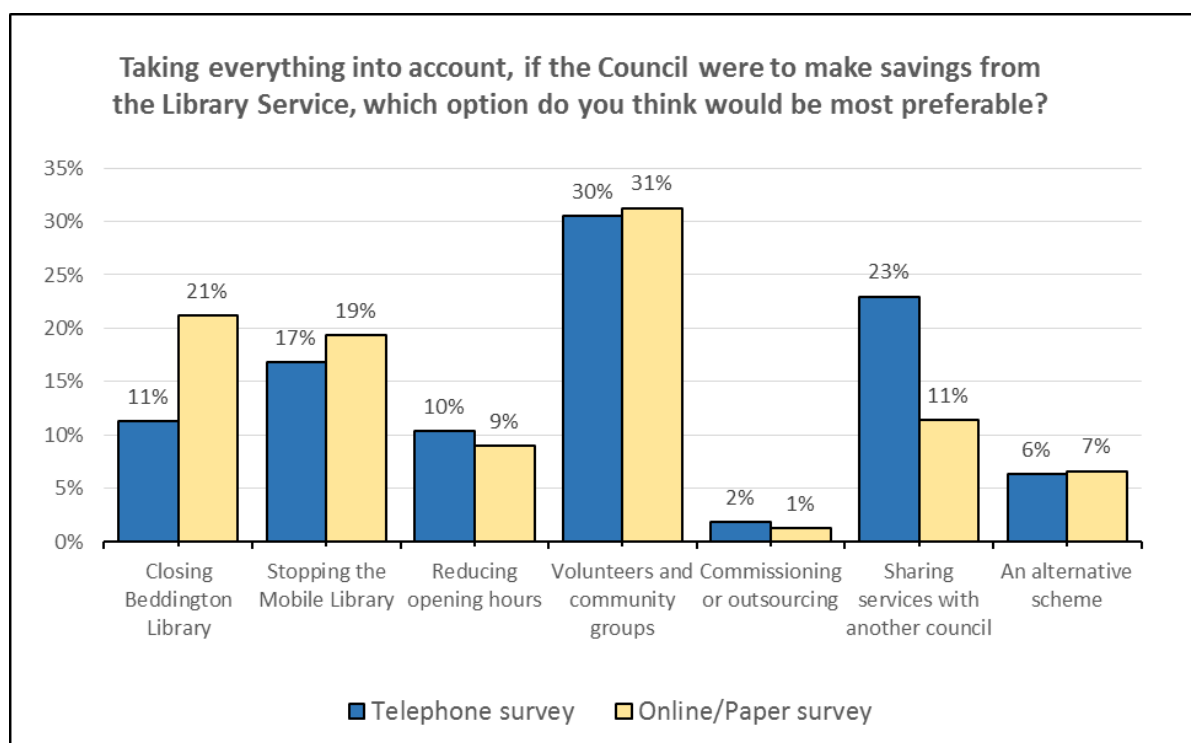
In the telephone survey, the option of sharing services with another council received significant support; the responses to the online/paper survey were still in favour, but much less so.

The option of closing Beddington library was supported by respondents to the online/paper survey, but, in the telephone survey, the same number of people agreed with the option of closing Beddington Library as disagreed.

Stopping the Mobile Library had a positive 'net agree' score in both of the surveys, but less so in the online/paper survey where responses from people who use the Mobile were more prevalent, and strongly against the option. People with a disability or long-term health condition were also against the proposal in the online/paper survey and much less supportive in the telephone survey.

Reducing opening hours was viewed positively in the telephone survey, but overall in the online/paper survey more people disagreed with the option than agreed. In the latter survey, however, people whose main library was Sutton Central were in favour of reducing opening hours in other libraries, as were people aged 65+. Written comments about this option were varied and suggest that further consultation might be considered before any changes are made.

Respondents to the surveys were asked to say which of the options was the most preferable. In both the online/paper survey and the telephone survey, the top answer given was making more use of volunteers and community groups. Telephone respondents put sharing library services with another councils as their second highest option, while in the online/paper survey the second most popular answer was closing Beddington Library, closely followed by stopping the Mobile Library. Stopping the Mobile Library was the third highest choice for the telephone survey.

Taking everything into account, if the Council were to make savings from the Library Service, which option do you think would be most preferable?

At the open public meeting, attendees were very positive about the quality of the service currently being provided by Sutton's libraries. There were several contributions in favour of retaining the Mobile Library which highlighted the potential impact of stopping that service on elderly people. Contributors were generally in favour of the use of volunteers and community groups but there were concerns that volunteers should not be used as substitutes for paid, professional librarians who were highly valued. This chimes with the results from the surveys that people in favour of this option mostly selected the community supported library as their favourite way forward.

The main body of the report contains a section on each question included in the surveys. Within each section is a summary of the results of the telephone survey, the online/paper survey and the open meeting, followed by more details about each of those elements separately. More detailed analysis and tables are included in Annex A on page 24. A full note of the open public meeting is at Annex F on page 60.

Contents

1. How people could get involved in the consultation

There were three main strands to the consultation:

- A telephone survey of a representative sample of 1000 Sutton residents (carried out by M.E.L research).
- An online/paper survey
- An open public meeting

The online/paper survey and the open public meeting were widely publicised: press notices were issued; Sutton's Future and links to the survey (where the meeting was highlighted) appeared prominently on Sutton's website; an A5 postcard about the Sutton's Future consultations – including the libraries one - was sent to all households in the borough; posters and the consultation documents were displayed in all of the libraries; a Sutton's Future newsletter was emailed to people who had registered with Sutton's website and the online panel; and a link to the survey was sent to all library users for whom we had a email address.

The methodologies used for the telephone and online/paper surveys were different. The respondents to the telephone survey were a representative sample of Sutton, based on:

- Gender,
- Age group, and
- Work status (employed full-time, not in employment full-time)

and the results were weighted to reflect the general population. As a result, we can be reasonably (95%) confident that the responses given by the sample are likely to be within ±5% of the answers that would have been obtained if everyone aged 16+ in Sutton had been interviewed.

The online/paper survey was completed by people who had deliberately chosen to take part and give their views and are not therefore representative of the borough as a whole.

In addition to the text in the questionnaire itself (which was repeated in the telephone survey), those completing the online/paper survey had access to a 'background information' document which gave further details about the financial context and options. It also contained links to profiles of each of the libraries which were made available on the Council's website.

Given the different methodologies, the analysis in this report presents the results of the two surveys separately and comments on the differences between the two.

The main options proposed for discussion at the open public meeting were: the use of volunteers and community groups; commissioning or outsourcing services; and sharing library services with another council. There was, however, space for people to discuss and raise any other issues of concern to them, including the Mobile Library.

The meeting allowed time for group discussions among the attendees and they were encouraged to put their thoughts, comments and questions on Post-It notes under the main options. There was then a plenary session where attendees were able to comment and ask questions of the panel made up of Members and Senior Council Officers.

2. Who responded to the Consultation?

There has been a very good response to the consultation about the future of the Library Service. Nearly 3,000 people provided their views through the consultation: 1000 through a

telephone survey and nearly 2,000 through the online/paper survey. In the latter survey, similar numbers of people responded online as on paper.

As discussed in section 1 above, the telephone survey was a representative sample of the borough. The respondents to the online/paper survey were predominantly library users, tended to be older than the general population, and around two-thirds of them were female. A full breakdown of the demographics of the respondents to the survey is at **Annex B**.

In the online/paper survey, 21 people said that they were responding on behalf of an organisation. These included:
- Sutton Age Uk
- One Voice for Adults
- Carshalton Beeches Residents Association
- Arts Network Sutton
- Sutton Writers
- Friends of Wallington Library
- Busy Bees Day Nursery
- Glaisdale Day Nursery
- Book clubs

The open public meeting – a full note of which is at **Annex F** - was attended by around 40 members of the public.

3. Which library do respondents use most often

3.1. Introduction/summary

The surveys asked respondents whether they used one of Sutton's libraries and, if so, which one they used most often.

The vast majority of the respondents to the online/paper survey (95%) were library users, whereas only 58% of the telephone respondents were. Among the library users, Sutton Central was the one used most often by respondents to both surveys, but the proportion of library users mainly using that library was higher for the telephone survey. Very few people contacted for the telephone survey used Beddington Library or the Mobile Library. Users of the Mobile library formed a significant group of respondents to the online/paper survey (they made up nearly 10% of the respondents who were library users). The different levels of participation in the two surveys by Mobile Library users has a particular impact on the results for the question about the closure of that service.

3.2. The telephone survey

As shown in Figure 1 below, 58% of the sample for the telephone survey currently used one of Sutton's libraries. This is broadly in line with the recently conducted Residents' Survey, where 52% of those completing a face-to-face interview said that they were library users.

Sutton Central library was used most often by 56% of the library users. This is a higher proportion that would have been expected from the Library User Survey and data from the Library Management System (which would suggest that between 40 and 50% of library users

would use Sutton Central most often). Only one of the 572 library users surveyed said that they used Beddington Library most and only 13 were users of the Mobile Library.

Figure 1
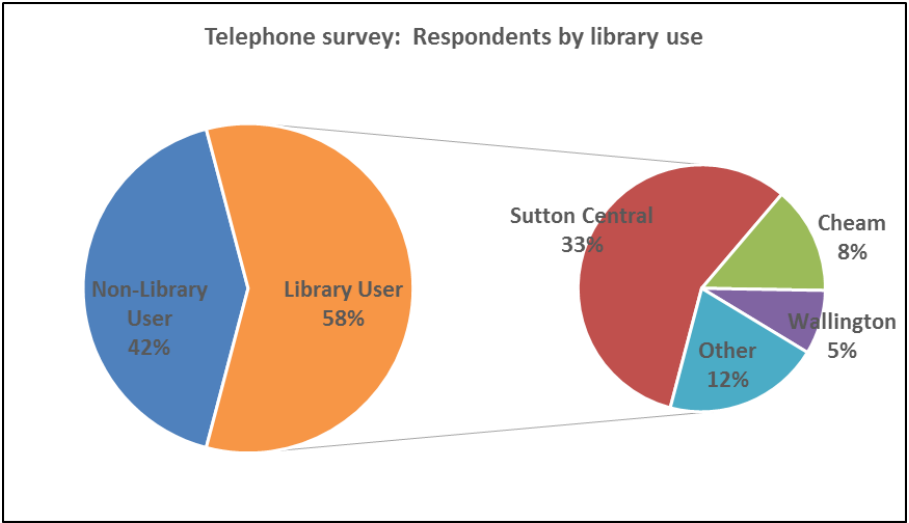
The 35-44 age group were the most likely to be library users, and the youngest age group, 16-24, were the least likely (69% compared to 47%). Library users were slightly more likely to be female than non-library users (53% compared to 49%) and slightly older (20% are 65+ compared to 16% of non-library users).

3.3. The online/paper survey

The proportion of people responding to the online/paper survey who were not library users was relatively low (96 people, 5% of the total respondents).

Of those who were library users, around a third said that Sutton Central was the library they used most often. There were 37 people who said that Beddington Library was the one they used most often (2%) and 169 whose main library was the Mobile Library (9.3%). Users of the branch libraries were therefore more highly represented in the online/paper survey than they were in the telephone survey.

Figure 2
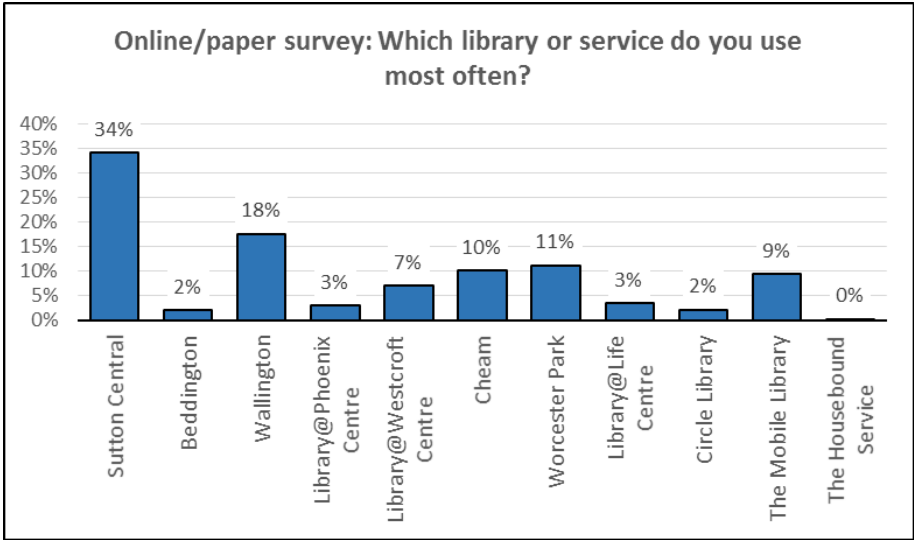
4. **Making savings from the library service**

4.1. Introduction/summary

The telephone and online/paper surveys gave some broad information about the financial context in which the Council finds itself. The respondents were then asked whether, given that financial context, the Council should be making savings from the library service. There were three options ("yes", "no", and "don't know"). Those people who said that they did not think savings should be made from the library service were then given four options for how they thought savings should be made instead: "council tax increase", "cut other services further", "use council reserves", or "a combination of the above".   Information was provided in the survey about the difficulties with each of those options:

- the Council have already raised Council tax by 1.99%, and any further increase would result in a referendum.
- all Council services are expected to make savings in the region of 27% over the next few years, further savings would be additional to this.
- The Council has a legal duty to run a balanced budget. It is therefore not sustainable to use reserves to run key services.

Around one in three of the respondents to both the telephone and online/paper surveys agreed that savings should be made from the library service; just over half of the respondents disagreed; with the remainder saying that they did not know. As might be expected, in both surveys, non-library users were more likely to agree to savings being made from the library service that library users.

Of the four options for making savings other than through the library service, 'Using Council reserves' and 'a combination' were the options picked most often in both of the surveys.

People who responded by suggesting that other services should be cut were asked to specify which services they had in mind. **Annex C** contains analysis and examples of the comments made under this section. The themes from the telephone and online/paper surveys were similar with people suggesting that savings could be made through, for example:
- Reducing staff costs/wages – particularly for higher paid staff
- Reducing wastage and becoming more efficient
- Closing the Life Centre
- Reducing spend on 'benefits'
- Charging for services and generating income
- Avoiding perceived wastage of funds on Sutton High Street and town centre, and Hackbridge.

4.2. The telephone survey

Overall, around a third of respondents to the telephone survey agreed that, given the financial context, savings should be made from the library service, and just over half disagreed. Non-library users were significantly more likely to agree with savings being made from the libraries budget than those who currently used a library, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Telephone Survey: Given the financial context, should savings be made from the library service?	All respondents	Library Users	Non-library users
Yes	32%	29%	36%
No	53%	59%	46%
Don't Know	15%	12%	18%

Younger respondents were more likely to respond 'don't know' than other age groups: 1 in 5 (20%) of those under 35 gave that answer, 49% said 'no' and 31% 'yes'.

Around 450 people who did not think that savings should be made from the library service answered the question on where they thought that savings should be made. The results are shown in the table below. There were no significant differences in the answers of library users and non-library users; nor between different demographic groups.

Table 2

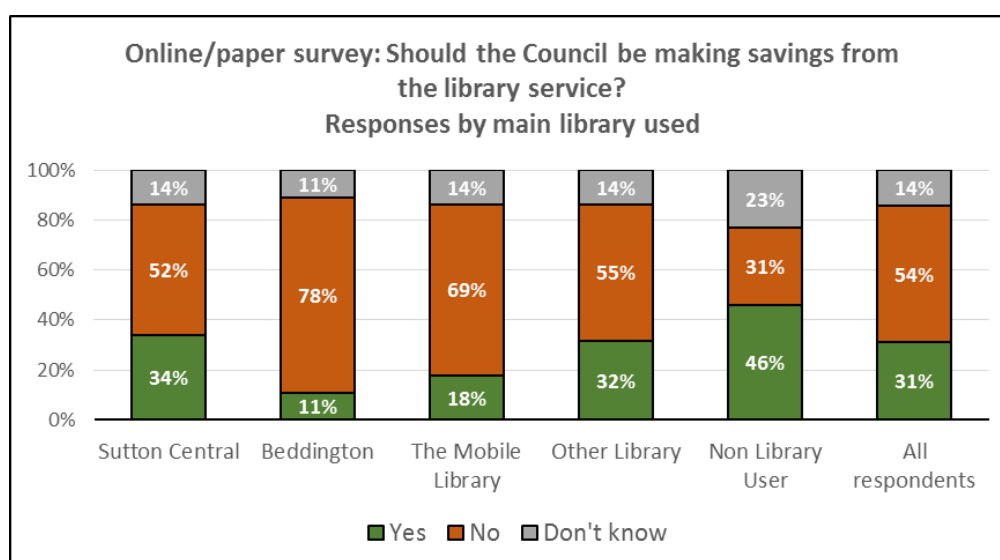| Telephone survey: Option for making savings	Number	%
Council Tax increase	92	20%
Cut other council services	97	21%
Use council reserves to meet the shortfall	200	44%
A combination of the above	193	42%

Note: figures sum to more than 100% as people could select multiple options

4.3. The online/paper survey

31% of respondents have said that, given the financial context, the Council should be making savings from the library service. 54% have said 'no', and 14% have said 'don't know'.

Those figures, however, differ by main library used as shown in Figure 3 below: most of the people whose main library was Beddington or the Mobile Library said that they did not feel that cuts should be made or did not know, whereas nearly half of the (96) non-library users said that cuts should be made from the library service.

Figure 3

Online/paper survey: Should the Council be making savings from the library service?
Responses by main library used

	Sutton Central	Beddington	The Mobile Library	Other Library	Non Library User	All respondents
Don't know	14%	11%	14%	14%	23%	14%
No	52%	78%	69%	55%	31%	54%
Yes	34%	11%	18%	32%	46%	31%

Males were more likely to agree to savings being made from the Library service than females (36% compared to 29%), with females being more likely to say 'don't know' (16% compared to 10%). The proportions of each gender saying that savings should **not** be made from the library service were similar (55% and 54%).

The table below shows how the people who did not agree with savings being made from the library service proposed that savings should be made. The proportion of people saying that a combination of options should be used was higher than for the telephone survey and there was a lower proportion of respondents saying that Council reserves should be used to meet the savings.

Table 3

Online/paper survey: Option for making savings	Number	Percentage
Council Tax Increase	208	21%
Cut other services	150	15%
Use Council reserves	230	23%
Combination	501	51%
Total responses to question	**990**	

NB % sums to more than 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

5. Closing Beddington Library

5.1. Introduction/summary

The question of whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal to close Beddington Library was prefaced with the text:

> "Given the relatively low number of users and high running costs for visits and issuing books, the Council is proposing to close Beddington Library. This option would result in savings of around £50,000."

In the telephone survey, as many people disagreed with the proposal as agreed with it. That was not the case with the online/paper survey where more respondents agreed with the proposal to close the library than disagreed. As might be expected, however, those people whose main library was Beddington (37 in the online/paper survey) were firmly against the proposal.

People with a disability or long-term health condition were also more negative towards the proposal in both of the surveys (as they were for all of the six options).
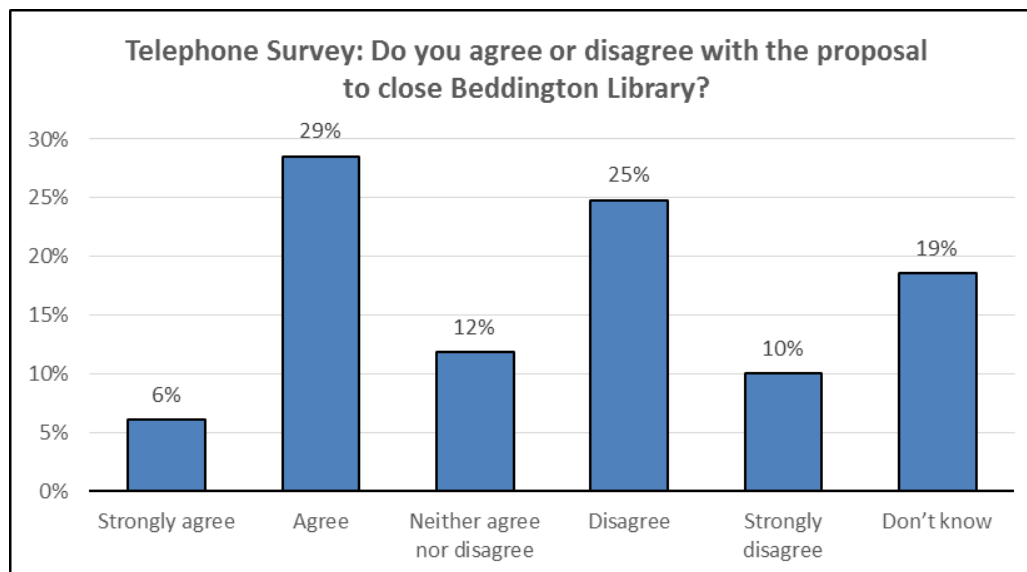
Annex A provides more details about the responses to the consultation by demographic group and, for the online/paper survey, the main library used.

5.2. The telephone survey

The graph below illustrates how people responded to the proposal to close Beddington Library in the telephone survey. Around a third of people agreed, and a third disagreed. There were significantly higher numbers of people who responded 'don't know' (1 in 5 respondents) to this

question than for the other options. That was particularly the case for library users. This was presumably because they had no knowledge of Beddington Library and, therefore, the likely impact of closing it.

Figure 4

Telephone Survey: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Beddington Library?

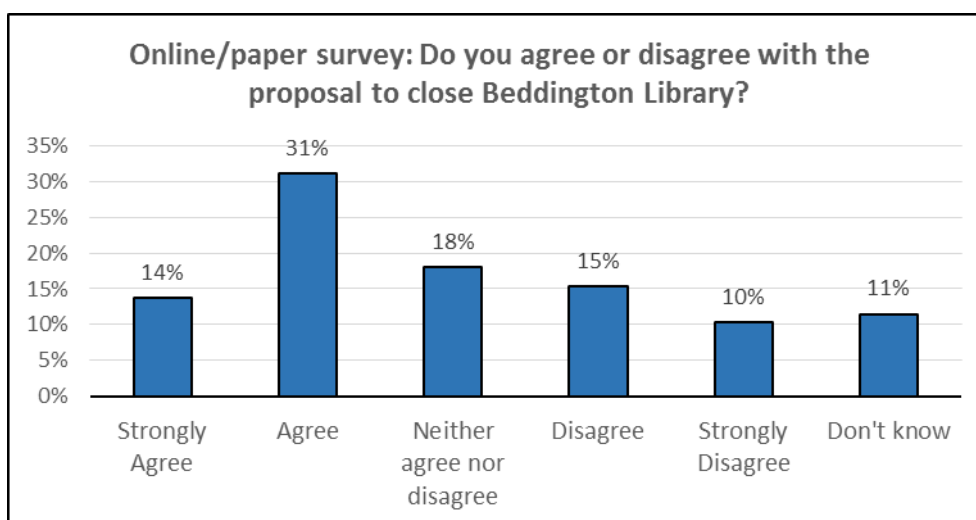| Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
6%	29%	12%	25%	10%	19%

People whose ethnicity was BME were significantly more positive about this option (the 'net agree' score for that group was +12%, compared to -2% for those describing themselves as 'white'). Those people who said that they had a disability or long term health condition were significantly less in favour (their 'net agree' score was -12% compared to +2% among those without a disability).

5.3. The online/paper survey

As shown in Figure 5 below, respondents to the online/paper survey were generally in favour of closing Beddington library: 45% of people agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal and 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed, giving a 'net agree' score of +19%.

Figure 5

Online/paper survey: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Beddington Library?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
14%	31%	18%	15%	10%	11%

The relatively small number of people whose main library was Beddington (37) were all against the proposal to close it (bar one person who did not answer the question). Respondents from other libraries were more in favour of the proposal to close Beddington than against it, and more so than the non-library users - See Table A.3 in **Annex A** for further details.

6. **Stopping the Mobile Library**

6.1. Introduction/summary

The survey asked people whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to stop the Mobile Library. The following text was included in the questionnaire and the telephone survey.

> "The Mobile Library has high running costs for issuing books and the number of users is going down. The Council therefore proposes to close it and develop the Housebound Library service to ensure that services continue for people who are unable to leave their home. This option would save around £166,000."

In the telephone survey (where there were only 13 users of the Mobile Library among the respondents), there was strong agreement with the proposal. Significant numbers of people (169) whose main library was the Mobile Library took part in the online/paper survey and were strongly opposed to the proposal. As a result, the overall figures for the online/paper survey were less positively in favour of stopping the Mobile Library than the telephone survey. People whose main library was Sutton Central or another library were in favour of the Mobile Library being closed, as were the non-library users.
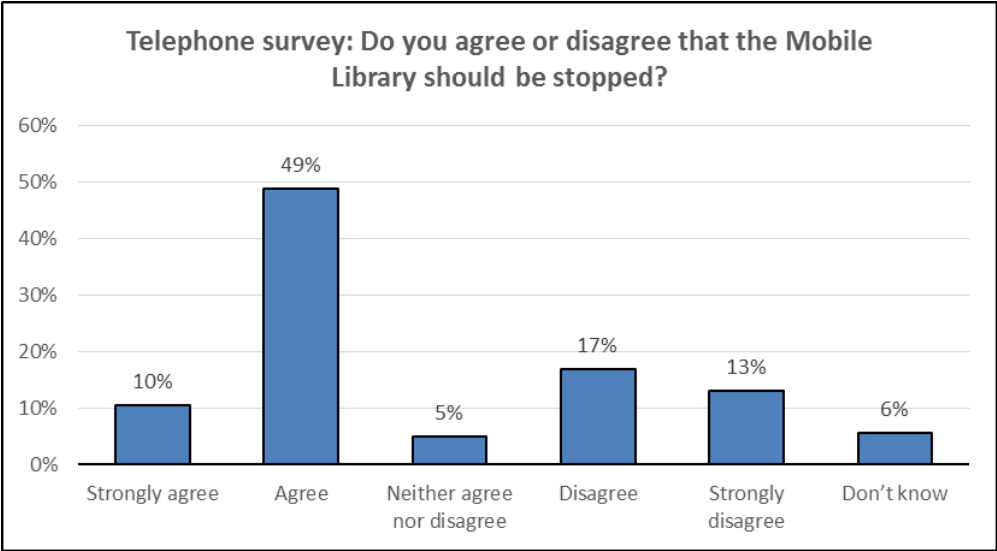
People with a disability or long-term health condition who responded to the online/paper survey were generally against the proposal; in the telephone survey, that group were less positive in their views of the proposal (but still in favour overall). **Annex A** contains more detailed information about the results for this question by demographic groups.

There were a number of contributions to the open public meeting about the Mobile Library. Several people spoke in favour of the service remaining open and emphasised, in particular, the impact that stopping the service would have on elderly people. **Annex F** includes a full note of that meeting.

6.2. The telephone survey

There was strong agreement from respondents to the proposal to stop the Mobile Library. As shown in Figure 6 below, 59% of people agreed or strongly agreed compared to 30% of people who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 6

Telephone survey: Do you agree or disagree that the Mobile Library should be stopped?

People who had a disability/long term health condition were significantly less positive (44% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 62% of those without a disability).   Lone parents also responded significantly less positively to this question.

6.3. The online/paper survey

The views of respondents to the online/paper survey to the proposal to close the Mobile Library were mixed. 46% of people either agreed or strongly agreed and 40% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed, leading to a 'net agree' score of +6%. Almost a quarter of respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal.

Figure 7

Online/paper survey: Do you agree or disagree that the Mobile Library service should be stopped?
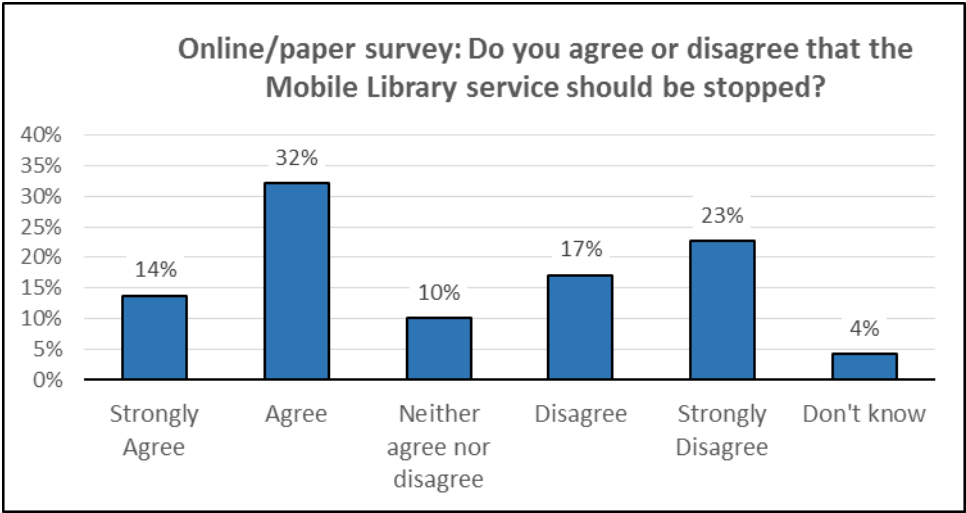
The results are heavily influenced by the strong feelings of those people whose main library was the Mobile Library: 141 of the 169 people whose main library was the Mobile Library strongly

disagreed with the option (84% of the Mobile Library user's responses, and nearly one in three of all the people who strongly disagreed with the option).

Those respondents who said that they had a disability or long-term health conditions (over a quarter of whom had the Mobile Library as their main library) were against the option: the 'net agree' score for that group was -36% compared to +15% for those without a disability.

The results for users of one of the branch libraries were more strongly in favour of stopping the Mobile Library than the overall figure (the 'net agree' score was 21%) and the 'net agree' score for the non-library users was 19%.

7. **Reducing opening hours**

7.1. Introduction/summary

The survey explained that the Council is considering maintaining the opening hours of Sutton Central Library, but reducing those in other branches, and asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with that proposal.
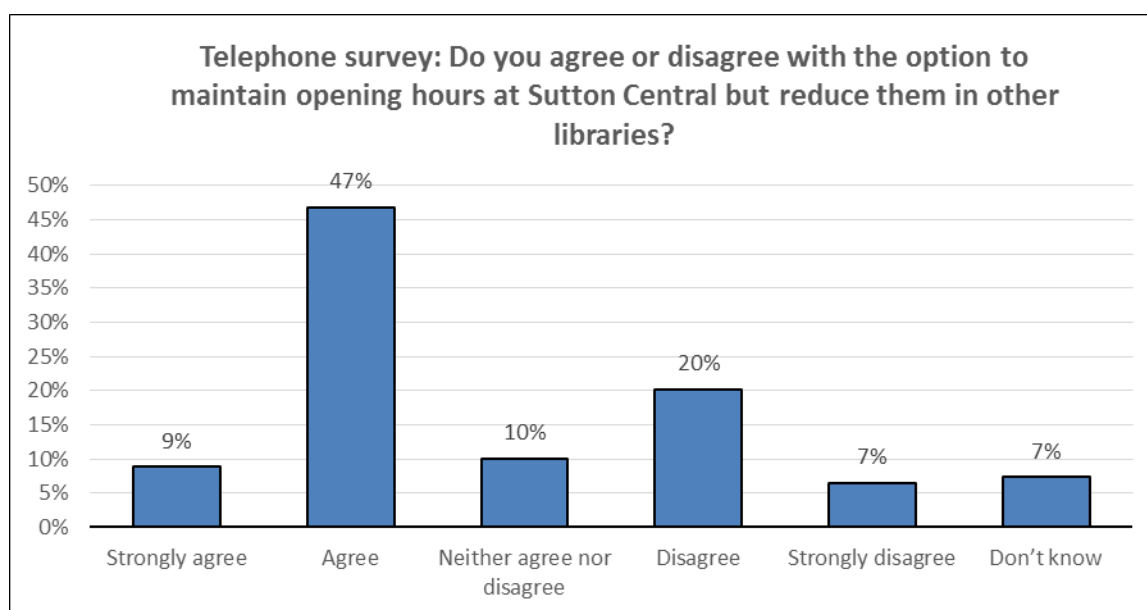
Respondents to the telephone survey were strongly in favour of the option. The overall scores from the online/paper survey were slightly more negative than positive. However, the scores for people whose main library was Sutton Central and those who were not library uses (the groups which were more strongly represented in the telephone survey) were in favour of the proposal.

Further breakdowns of the results for this question are included in **Annex A**.

7.2. The telephone survey

Overall, in the telephone survey, people were in favour of the proposal to maintain opening hours at Sutton Central but reduce them elsewhere, as shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

Telephone survey: Do you agree or disagree with the option to maintain opening hours at Sutton Central but reduce them in other libraries?

Strongly agree: 9%
Agree: 47%
Neither agree nor disagree: 10%
Disagree: 20%
Strongly disagree: 7%
Don't know: 7%

The proposal was more strongly supported by people whose main library was Sutton Central (61% of people agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 48% of people who used other libraries). BME groups were more strongly in favour of this option than people whose ethnicity was 'white'; and those with a disability/long term health condition were less positive (their 'net agree' score was +13% compared to +32% for those who were not disabled).

7.3. The online/paper survey

In the online/paper survey, more people were against the proposal to change the opening hours than were in favour: 39% of respondents either agreed or disagreed; and 45% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 9
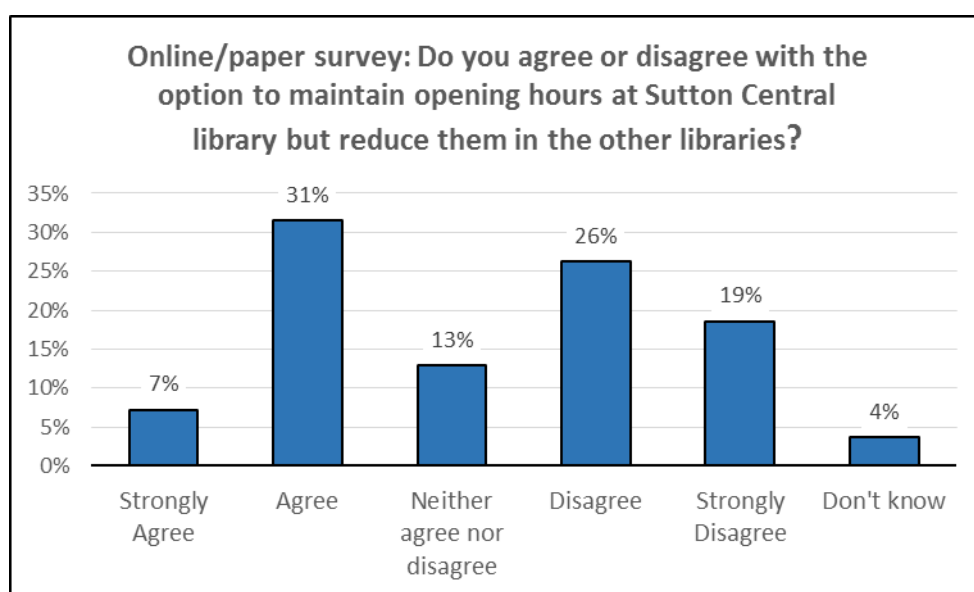
People whose main library was Sutton Central were, however, more in favour than users of the branch libraries, presumably because the changes would not affect them as directly.

In terms of age groups, those respondents aged 65 and over were generally in favour of the option. This may be because the majority of that group are retired and therefore have more flexibility in when they can use the library service.

8. Making more use of volunteers and community groups

8.1. Introduction/summary

The text included in the questionnaire and telephone survey before the question on whether people agreed or disagreed with getting more community involvement and volunteering in libraries was:

> "There are a number of models for increasing community involvement and using volunteers in the library service. In some cases, community groups have completely taken
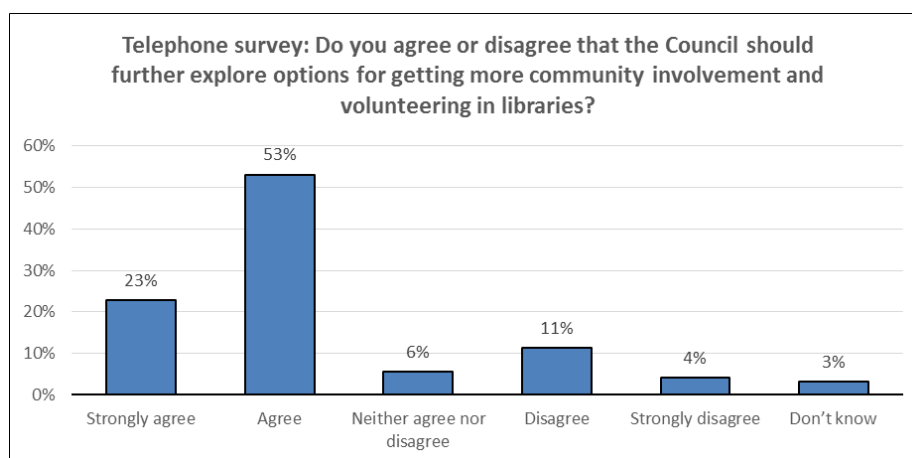
over the running of a library; in other cases volunteers supplement the work of paid library staff."

The respondents to both the telephone and online/paper surveys were very strongly in favour of this option. There were, however, concerns expressed in the text comments of the online/paper survey and at the open meeting about the appropriateness of using volunteers, with many people suggesting that they were a poor substitute for professional librarians.

8.2. The telephone survey

Of the 6 options, this option received the highest levels of support from the respondents to the telephone survey with a 'net agree' score of +61%.
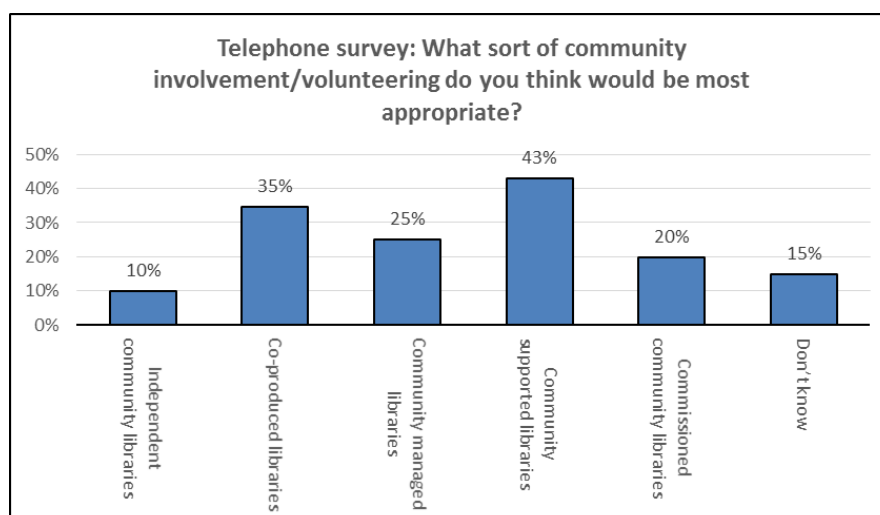
Figure 10

Telephone survey: Do you agree or disagree that the Council should further explore options for getting more community involvement and volunteering in libraries?

Couples with children had particularly positive scores: 86% agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.

Those people who agreed with the proposal were then asked what sort of community involvement they thought would be most appropriate (people could select one or more options from a list). The most popular option was 'community supported libraries, which would be Council-led with paid staff but with significant support from volunteers'.
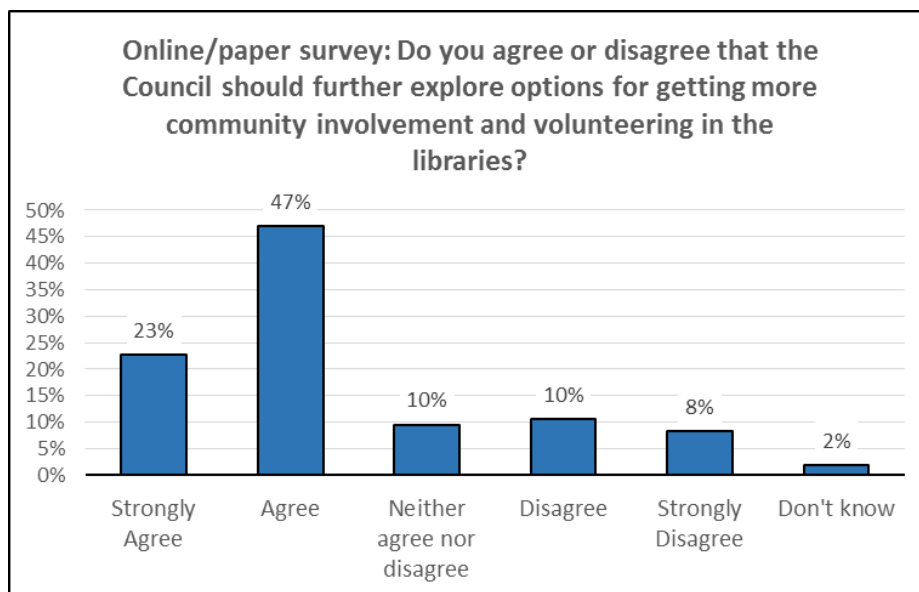
Figure 11

Telephone survey: What sort of community involvement/volunteering do you think would be most appropriate?

(Note: % sum to more than 100% as respondents could pick more than one option)

As with the telephone survey, this option was very strongly supported in the online/paper survey.

Figure 12

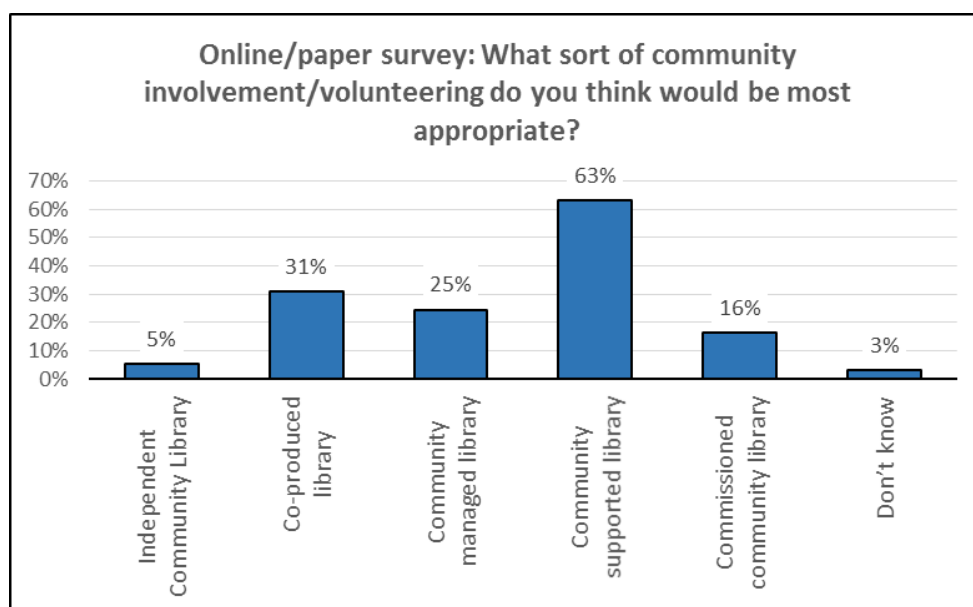Online/paper survey: Do you agree or disagree that the Council should further explore options for getting more community involvement and volunteering in the libraries?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
23%	47%	10%	10%	8%	2%

The option was strongly supported by both library users and non-library users, with the latter being particularly positive (the 'net agree' score was 76%). It also found favour with all of the demographic groups.

'Community supported library' was the type of community support that was favoured by the most people, with nearly two thirds of the people answering the question picking that one.

Figure 13

Online/paper survey: What sort of community involvement/volunteering do you think would be most appropriate?

Independent Community Library	Co-produced library	Community managed library	Community supported library	Commissioned community library	Don't know
5%	31%	25%	63%	16%	3%

(Note: % sum to more than 100% as respondents could pick more than one option)

8.4. The open public meeting

At the open public meeting, while there was general support for using volunteers, many participants made it clear that volunteers should not be used as substitutes for paid, professional librarians, who were highly valued. Examples of some of those comments are:

"Professionally qualified staff are essential. Their skills should be valued and cannot necessarily be provided by volunteers."

"I am happy to volunteer in some way but would hesitate to do this if it meant paid staff losing their jobs."

"Against volunteers they have less knowledge but are taking jobs from skilled librarians"

9. Commissioning or outsourcing the library service

9.1. Introduction/summary

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should further explore outsourcing the library service to an outside company or trust.

This was the least supported option in both the telephone and online/paper surveys. In the telephone survey, it was the only one where more people disagreed with it than agreed.

There were also concerns raised about outsourcing at the open public meeting.

9.2. The telephone survey

Commissioning or outsourcing was the least popular of the 6 options and the only one where more people disagreed than agreed in the telephone survey: it had a 'net agree' score of -30%.

Figure 14

Telephone survey: Do you agree or disagree that the Council should further explore outsourcing Library services?
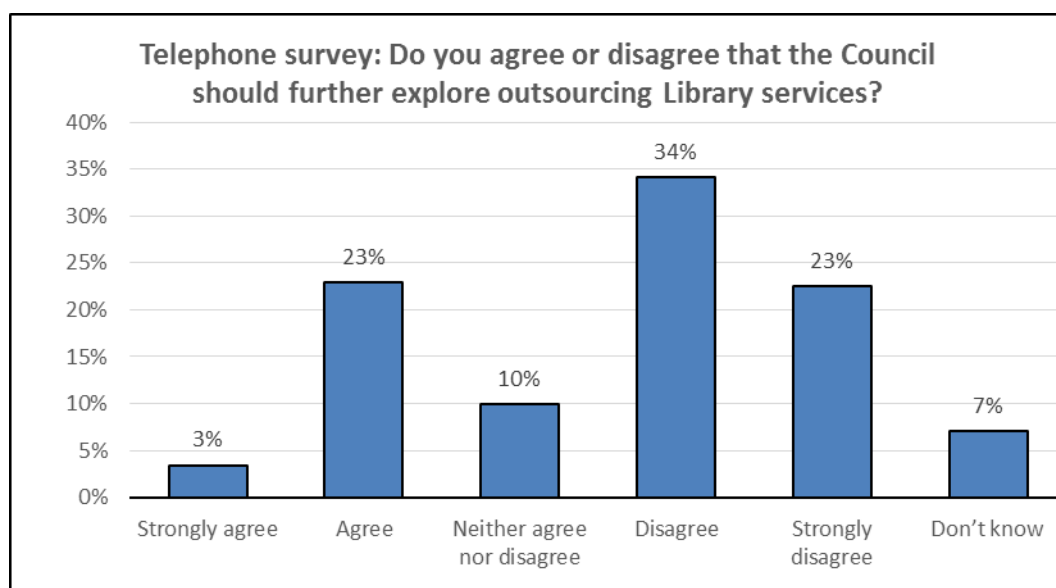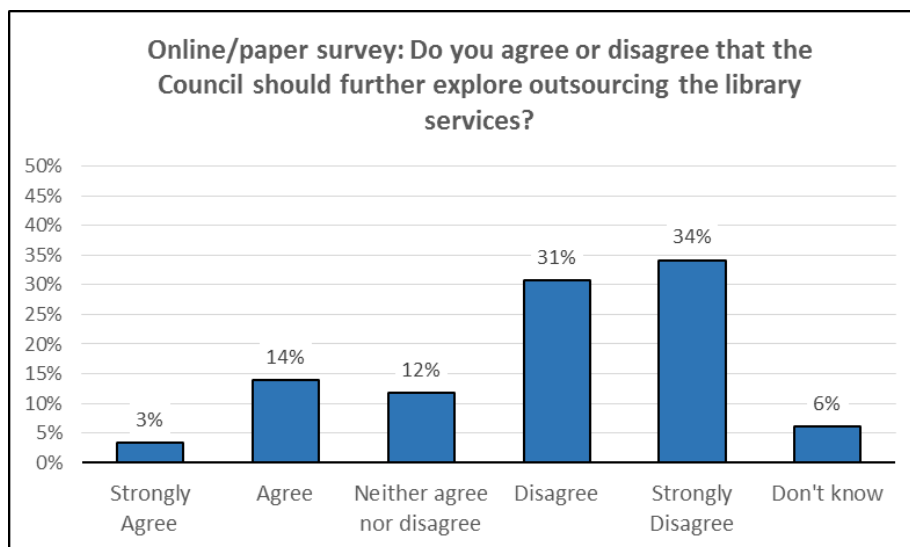
While still negative overall, younger people (aged under 35), BME groups and non-library users were less negative than other groups about this proposal.

9.3. The online/paper survey

As with the telephone survey, respondents to the online/paper survey were strongly against this option.

Figure 15

Online/paper survey: Do you agree or disagree that the Council should further explore outsourcing the library services?

Whilst library users were consistently against commissioning or outsourcing, non-library users in the online/paper survey were in favour of the option.

The responses were consistently against the proposal for all of the main demographic groups (age, gender, disability and ethnicity). Those aged under 35 were, however, the least negative of the groups.

9.4. The open public meeting

There were very few comments in favour of this option at the open public meeting. Comments against the proposal focused on concerns about maintaining the quality of the service, and whether an outsourcing arrangement would represent value for money. Some examples of those comments are:

"Why would outsourcing necessarily be done more cheaply? Implications? Reduced Service? Less choice etc? Against this option strongly!"

"How could it save money to give the service to a private profit making company? Sounds crazy!"

10. Sharing library services with another council

10.1. Introduction/summary

The surveys asked people whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should further explore sharing library services with another Council.

More people were in favour of this proposal than against it in both the telephone and online/paper surveys. The results from the telephone survey were, however, more strongly in favour.

Comments at the open public meeting were also broadly supportive of the option.

10.2. The telephone survey

Sharing services with another Council had strongly positive scores. There were no significant differences in the scores from any of the main demographic groups.
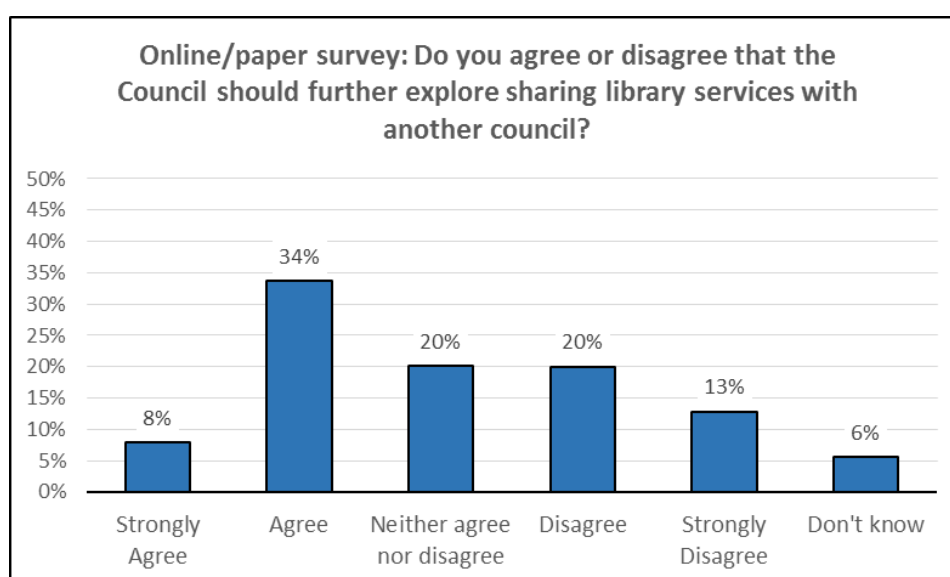
Figure 16
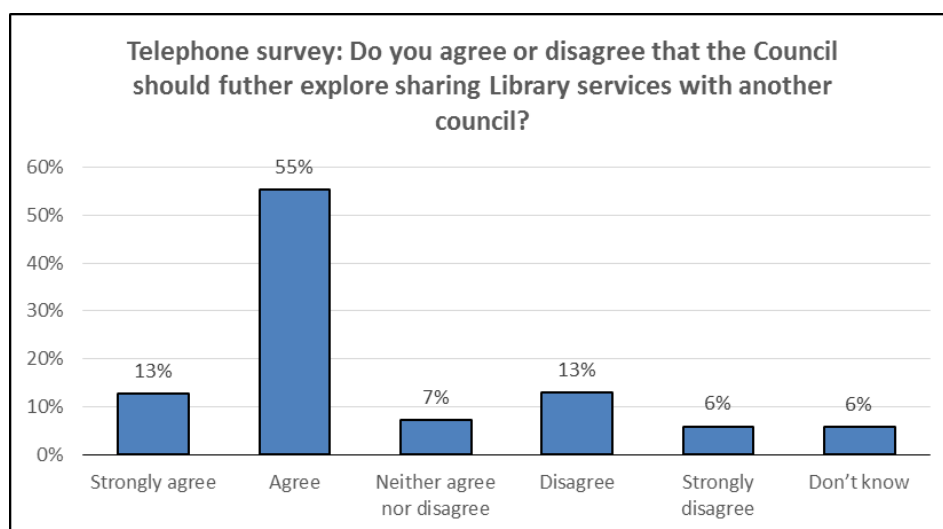
10.3. The online/paper survey

More people agreed with this option than disagreed with it in the online/paper survey.

Figure 17

Non-library users who responded to the online/paper survey were more positive about this option than library-users: they had a 'net agree' score of +40% compared to +9% for all

respondents. Males were more positive about the option than females and those with a disability or long-term health condition were marginally against the option.

10.4. The open public meeting

At the open public meeting there were several comments in favour of this option (for example, "Yes, makes absolute sense!", and "This model is viable. There are opportunities to share back office services and staff.") but there were some concerns expressed about the quality of the service that might result from a sharing agreement and also about the long-term viability of the arrangement.

11. The most preferable option

11.1. Introduction

Following the individual questions about each of the six options presented, there was an overall question which asked:

> "talking everything into account, if the council were to make savings from the library service, which option do you think would be most preferable".

The respondents were asked to select one of the six options or propose and alternative scheme.

In the telephone survey, the top items selected were making more use of community groups and volunteers, and sharing library services with another council. The use of volunteers and community groups was also the top answer given in the online/paper survey, but closing Beddington Library and stopping the Mobile Library also scored strongly.

When describing an alternative scheme, those people who selected that option generally suggested the same types of savings as in **section 4** above. There were, however, suggestions that other libraries could be closed (particularly Cheam Library). Other people commented that they would like to implement a combination of the options or that there should be no cuts made at all. **Annex D** gives more details about the text responses to this question.

11.2. The telephone survey

When asked which option they thought was most preferable taking everything into account, one in three people gave the option of volunteering/community involvement. The option with the next highest score was sharing services with another Council which was selected by just less than a quarter of respondents.
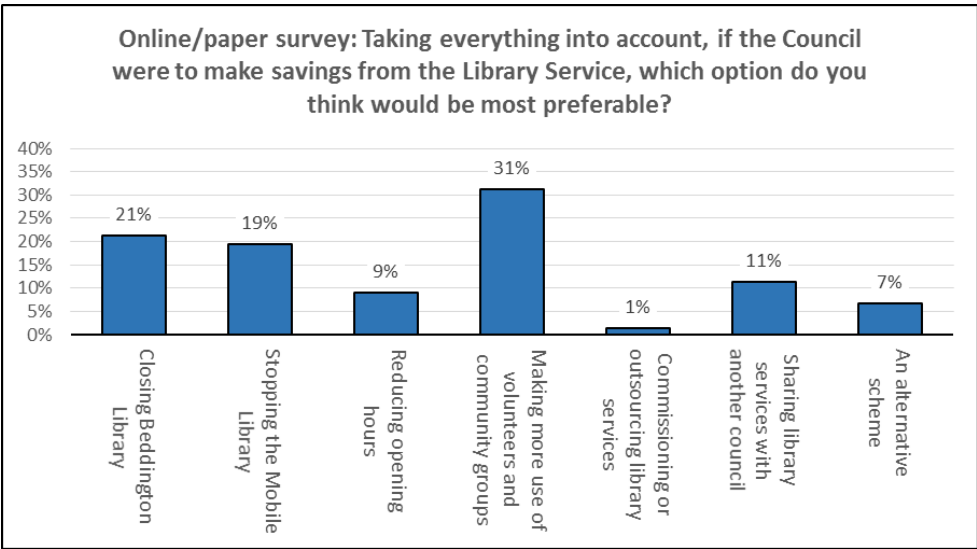
Figure 18

Telephone survey: Taking everything into account, if the council were to make savings from the library service, which option do you think would be most preferable?

- Closing Beddington Library: 11%
- Stopping the Mobile Library: 17%
- Reducing opening hours: 10%
- Making more use of volunteers and community groups: 30%
- Commissioning or outsourcing library services: 2%
- Sharing library services with another council: 23%
- An alternative scheme: 6%

11.3. The online/paper survey

'Making more use of volunteers and community groups' was the most popular choice for the most preferable option, with around a third of respondents choosing it.

Figure 19

Online/paper survey: Taking everything into account, if the Council were to make savings from the Library Service, which option do you think would be most preferable?

- Closing Beddington Library: 21%
- Stopping the Mobile Library: 19%
- Reducing opening hours: 9%
- Making more use of volunteers and community groups: 31%
- Commissioning or outsourcing library services: 1%
- Sharing library services with another council: 11%
- An alternative scheme: 7%

11.4. Text comments on alternative schemes

In the telephone survey, 38 people described an alternative scheme. Half of those either said that a combination of the options would be preferable (10) or that there should not be any cuts (9). Other comments were around themes which came up in the general question about making savings, for example, closing the Life Centre and being more efficient.

There were around 190 responses to this section in the online/paper survey. The general themes were:

- Reinforcing one or more of the options;
- No cuts should be made
- Closing the Life Centre
- Charging for services and income generation
- Staffing and salaries
- Closing other libraries
- Making better use of buildings.

12. Text comments on the consultation

Annex E provides a full analysis of the text comments given in response to the open question at the end of the online/paper survey: "Are there any further comments you would like to contribute to the consultation?".

A large number of the contributions were general positive comments about the importance of libraries. In addition, many people used this space to reaffirm that they did not think that cuts should be made to the library service. Other significant themes were:

- The use of volunteers and paid staff (there were opposing views about the use of volunteers with some welcoming increased use of the community while others were concerned about the effects on the service).
- Opening hours (again the comments were mixed – some in favour of reducing hours, some against)
- The mobile library (the majority of the comments were in favour of keeping it, but not all)

Other themes, with smaller numbers of comments, were around: the pros and cons of closing Beddington Library; making cuts in other ways (Life Centre, raising Council Tax, wastage and efficiency savings); charging and income generation; closing other libraries or focusing on the central library; and the use of library buildings and co-location.

Annex A: Further tables and analysis

Overall results

The tables and graphs below show in summary how people responded to the 6 options for making savings from the library service in the telephone and online/paper surveys.

Table A.1 The Telephone Survey

Telephone survey	Closing Beddington Library	Stopping the Mobile Library	Reducing opening hours	Volunteers and Community Groups	Commi-ssioning or out-sourcing	Sharing with another council
Strongly agree	6%	10%	9%	23%	3%	13%
Agree	29%	49%	47%	53%	23%	55%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	5%	10%	6%	10%	7%
Disagree	25%	17%	20%	11%	34%	13%
Strongly disagree	10%	13%	7%	4%	23%	6%
Don't know	19%	6%	7%	3%	7%	6%
Net agree (% agree minus % disagree)	*0%*	*29%*	*29%*	*61%*	*-30%*	*49%*

Table A.2 The Online/paper Survey

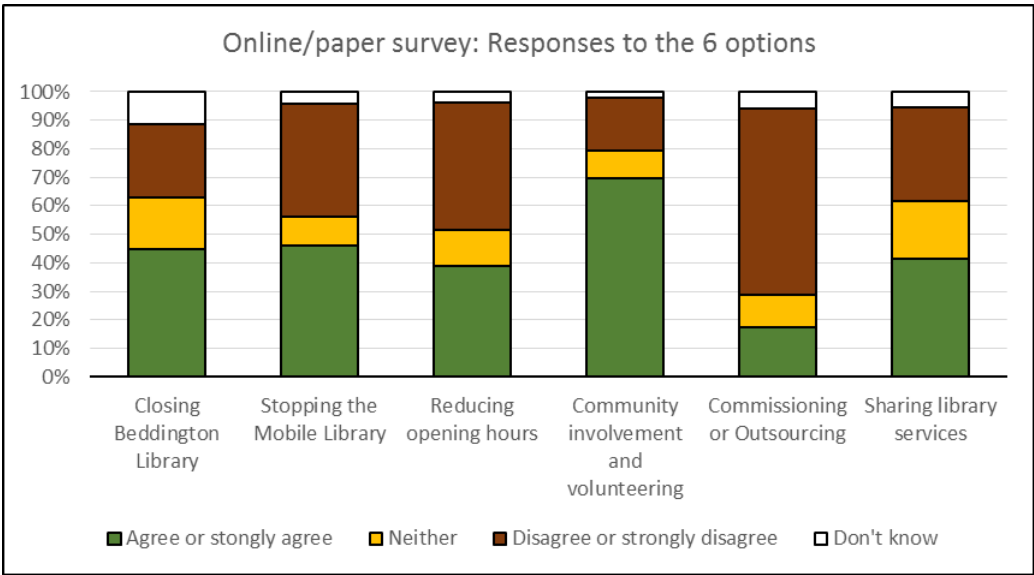| Online/paper survey	Closing Beddington Library	Stopping the Mobile Library	Reducing opening hours	Volunteers and Community Groups	Commi-ssioning or out-sourcing	Sharing with another council
Strongly Agree	14%	14%	7%	23%	3%	8%
Agree	31%	32%	31%	47%	14%	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	10%	13%	10%	12%	20%
Disagree	15%	17%	26%	10%	31%	20%
Strongly Disagree	10%	23%	19%	8%	34%	13%
Don't know	11%	4%	4%	2%	6%	6%
Net agree (% agree minus % disagree)	*19%*	*6%*	*-6%*	*51%*	*-48%*	*9%*

Figure A.1 The Telephone Survey

Telephone survey: Responses to the 6 options

■ Agree or strongly agree ■ Neither ■ Disagree or strongly disagree □ Don't know

Figure A.2 The Online/paper survey

Online/paper survey: Responses to the 6 options

■ Agree or stongly agree ■ Neither ■ Disagree or strongly disagree □ Don't know
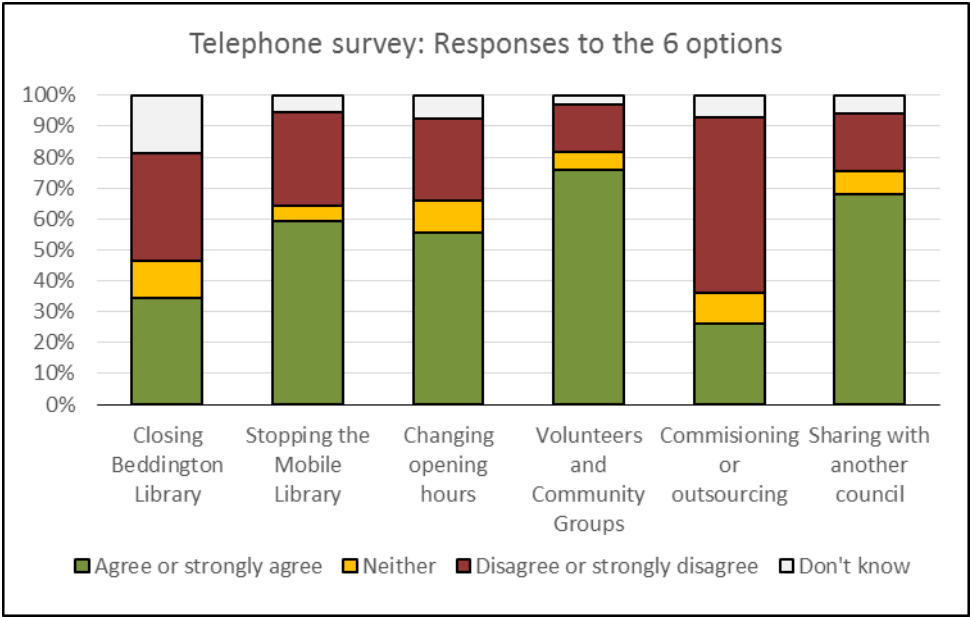
'Net agree' Scores

The 'net agree' scores (the % who agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal minus the % who disagreed or strongly disagreed) for the telephone and online/paper surveys are shown in the graphs below.

Figure A.3
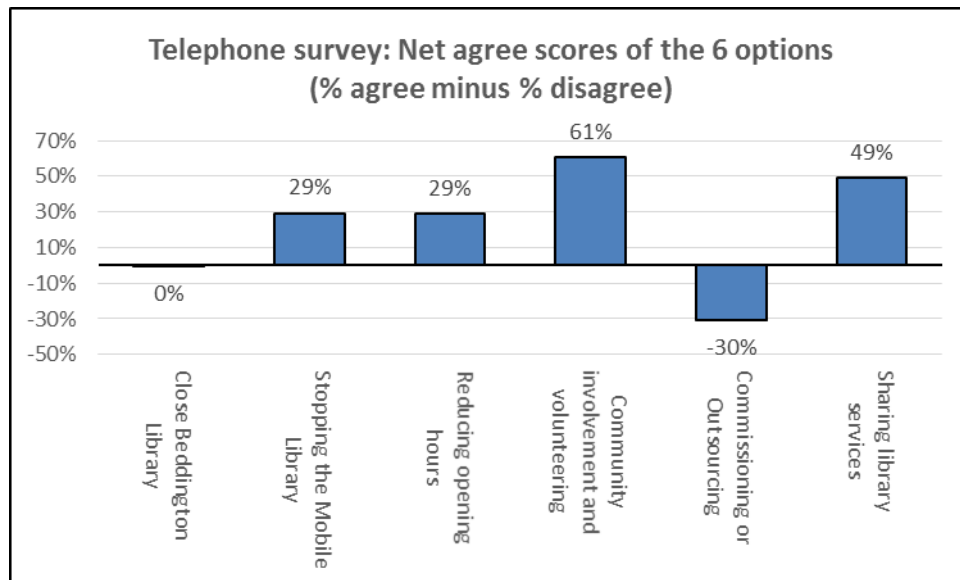
Figure A.4
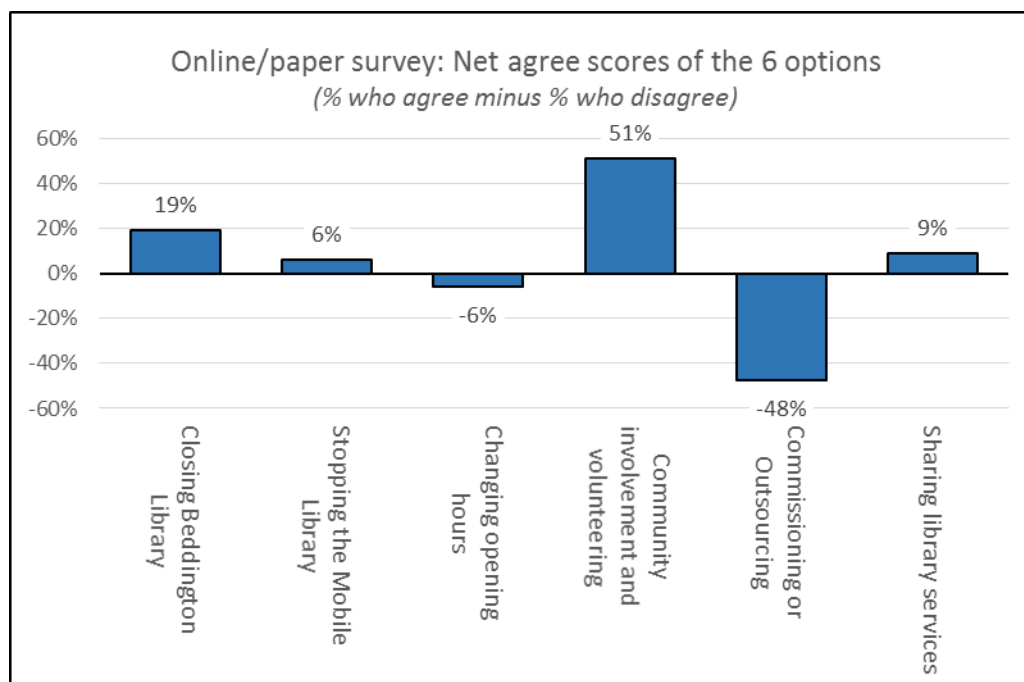
There are some clear differences between the telephone survey and the online/paper survey. The proposal to close Beddington Library had a net agree score of 0 in the telephone survey. With the exception of the option around commissioning or outsourcing, the other options had positive 'net agree' scores. Making more use of volunteers and community groups had the

most positive score and sharing services with another council was second.   For the online/paper survey, the option of closing Beddington Library had a high 'net agree' score, and the option of reducing opening hours had more people disagreeing than agreeing.

Telephone survey: differences in 'net agree' scores by demographics and library use

The 'net agree' score for closing Beddington library was 0 for both library users and non-users. For all of the other options, non-library users were more likely to respond in favour of the options than those who currently used one of the libraries. In particular, non-library users were significantly less negative about the commissioning or outsourcing option.

Figure A.5
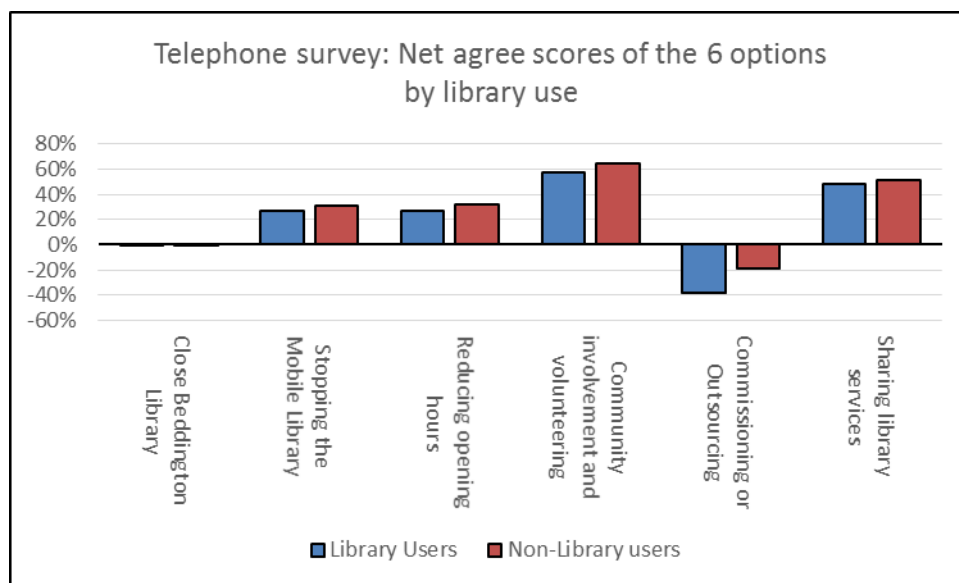
Younger people (those aged under 35) were significantly less negative about outsourcing than the older age groups. Getting more volunteer or community involvement was less positively viewed by people aged 65 and over.
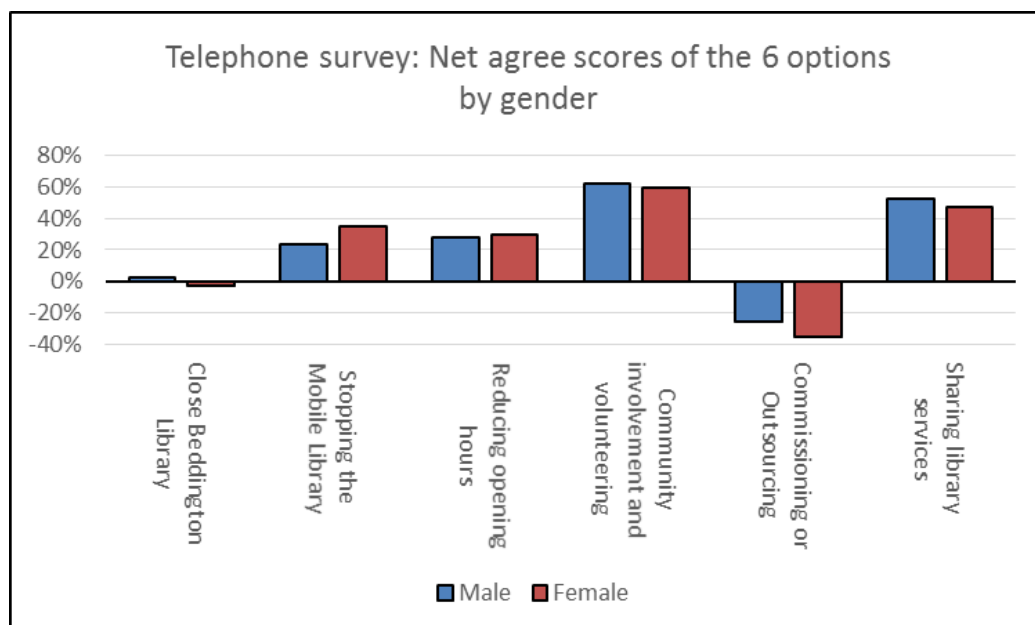
Figure A.5.1
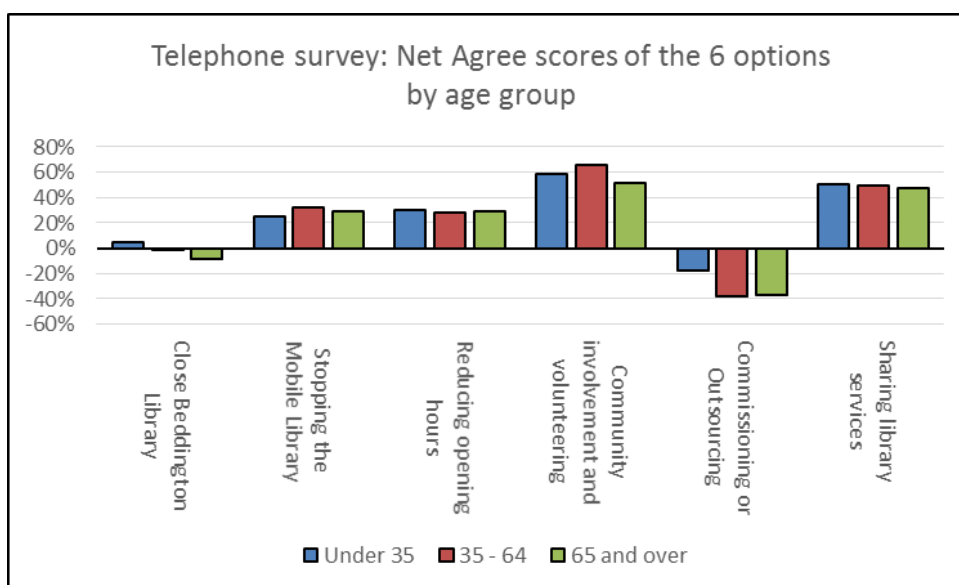
Those people who had a disability or long term health condition were less positive about all of the options and significantly so for the proposals to close Beddington Library, stop the Mobile Library and change opening hours. The 'net agree' scores for those with a disability/health condition were, however, still positive for all of the options except closing Beddington Library and commissioning or outsourcing.

Figure A.5.2
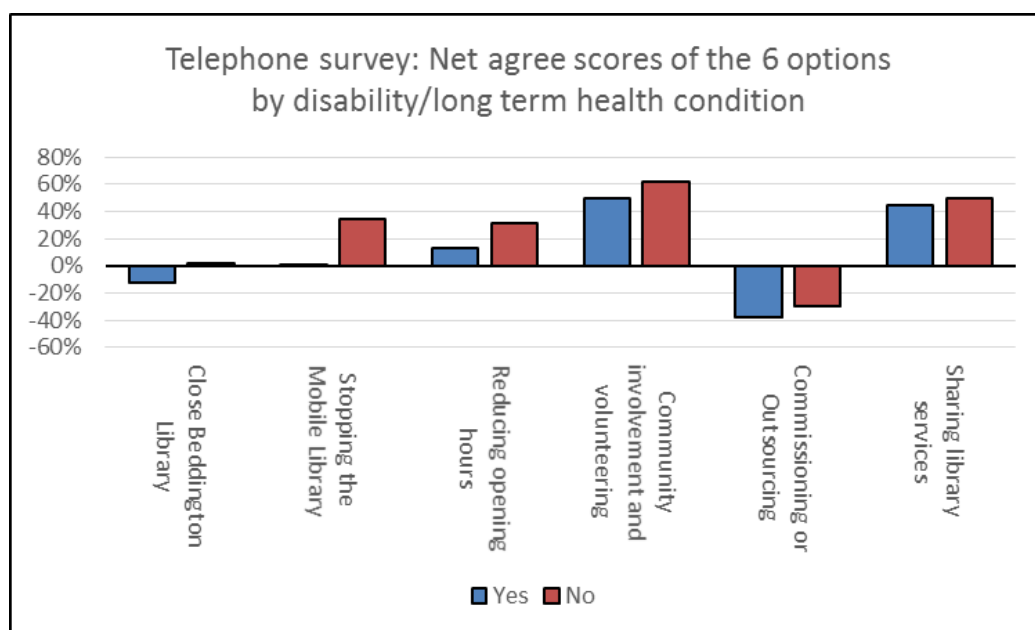
Females were significantly less positive about stopping the Mobile Library than males. Males were less negative about commissioning or outsourcing.

Figure A.5.3

In terms of ethnicity, BME respondents were more positive about all of the options, particularly changing opening hours, volunteer/community involvement and commissioning or outsourcing.

Figure A.5.4

Telephone survey: Net agree scores of the 6 options by ethnicity
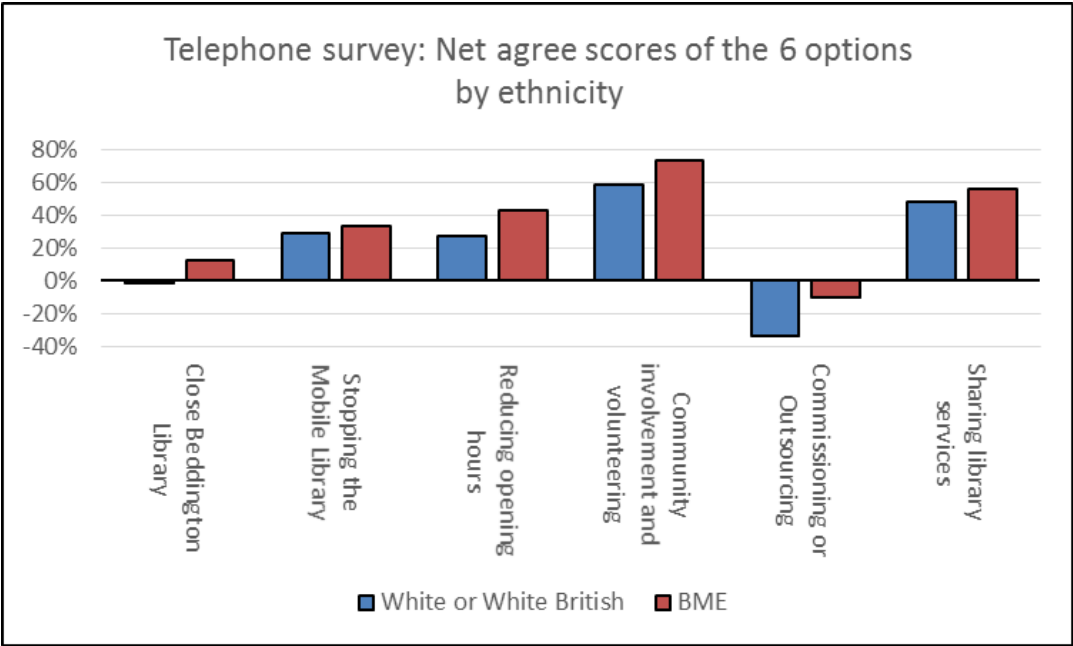
Lone parents were significantly less positive about stopping the Mobile Library service than other groups of people. People whose household structure was 'couple with children' were significantly more positive about volunteering/community involvement.

Figure A.5.5

Telephone survey: Net agree scores of the 6 options by household structure
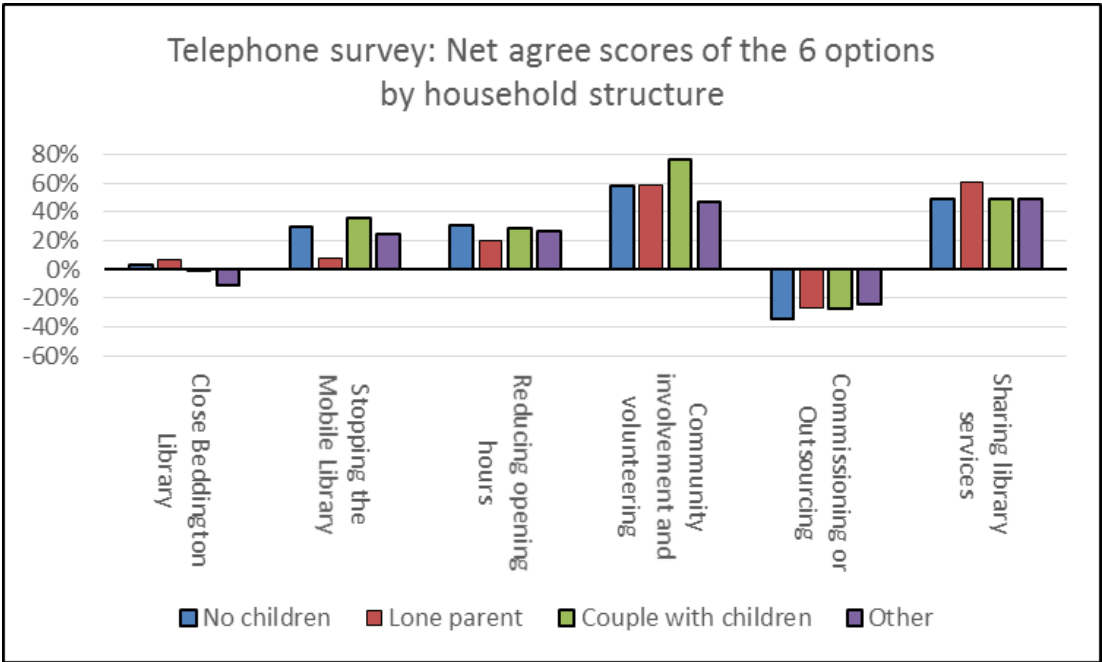
Online/paper survey: differences in the 'net agree' scores by library used and demographics

Respondents whose main library was Beddington or the Mobile Library had very large negative 'net agree' scores for the options involving stopping their service. The outsourcing option was unpopular with all groups, except the non-library users (who were positive about all of the options). Non-library users were particularly in favour of the option of making more use of volunteers and community groups as shown in Table A.3 below.

Table A.3

Online/Paper Survey: Net Agree Scores	Main Library Used				Non Library User	All
	Sutton Central	Beddington	The Mobile Library	Other		
Closing Beddington Library	19%	-97%	24%	22%	15%	19%
Stopping the Mobile Library	8%	8%	-92%	21%	19%	6%
Reducing opening hours	32%	-27%	10%	-33%	22%	-6%
Making more use of volunteers and community groups	49%	30%	34%	52%	76%	51%
Commissioning or outsourcing library services	-51%	-41%	-41%	-51%	3%	-48%
Sharing library services with another council	6%	8%	7%	7%	41%	9%

Table A.4 below shows the 'net agree' scores for various demographic groups. Older people were less in favour of closing the Mobile Library than other age groups, as were people with a disability or long-term health condition. Reducing opening hours was supported by older people but other age groups disagreed.

Table A.4

Online/paper survey: Net Agree Scores	Age Group			Disability/ LT Health Condition		Ethnicity		Gender		All respondents
	Under 35	35 to 64	65 and over	Yes	No	White	BME	Female	Male	
Closing Beddington Library	16%	16%	26%	11%	22%	20%	21%	18%	21%	19%
Stopping the Mobile Library	8%	10%	1%	-36%	15%	6%	15%	6%	10%	6%
Reducing opening hours	-11%	-12%	9%	-10%	-4%	-5%	-3%	-8%	0%	-6%
Making more use of volunteers and community groups	50%	49%	57%	36%	55%	53%	51%	53%	50%	51%
Commissioning or outsourcing library services	-37%	-44%	-56%	-49%	-47%	-48%	-42%	-47%	-47%	-48%
Sharing library services with another council	9%	12%	7%	-2%	11%	9%	7%	4%	21%	9%

Most preferable option

In the telephone survey, 'making more use of volunteers and community groups' was the option chosen most often as the most preferable. That was true for both library users and non-library users as shown in the table below.

Table A.5

Telephone survey: Most preferable option	Library user		
	Yes	**No**	**Total**
Closing Beddington Library	13%	9%	11%
Stopping the Mobile Library	18%	15%	17%
Reducing opening hours	10%	11%	10%
Making more use of volunteers and community groups	30%	32%	30%
Commissioning or outsourcing library services	1%	2%	2%
Sharing library services with another council	21%	25%	23%
An alternative scheme	7%	6%	6%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

In the online/paper survey, 'making more use of volunteers and community groups' was the option selected most often by users of all libraries (except Beddington) as shown in the table below. Those people whose main libraries were the Mobile Library or Beddington Library were much less likely than others to select the options involving those libraries as their most preferred one.

Table A.6

Online/Paper Survey: Most preferable option	Main Library Used				Non Library User	All respondents
	Sutton Central	**Beddington**	**The Mobile Library**	**Other Library**		
Closing Beddington Library	23%	0%	27%	21%	7%	21%
Stopping the Mobile Library	16%	42%	1%	23%	19%	19%
Reducing opening hours	8%	3%	21%	8%	6%	9%
Making more use of volunteers and community groups	32%	33%	34%	29%	42%	31%
Commissioning or outsourcing library services	2%	3%	1%	1%	6%	1%
Sharing library services with another council	11%	15%	15%	11%	12%	11%
An alternative scheme	7%	3%	3%	6%	8%	7%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Annex B: Demographic details of the respondents to the surveys

The respondents to the telephone survey were a representative sample of Sutton, based on:

- Gender,
- Age group, and
- Work status (employed full-time, not in employment full-time)

The demographics of the respondents to the online/paper survey differed markedly. For example, in the online/paper survey two thirds of the participants were female and those aged 65+ made up around a third of the group compared to 18% of the telephone survey. As a result of that, the online paper survey contained more people who described their household type as 'pensioner' and there was a lower proportion of people who were working full time.

Gender	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
Male	487	49%	1224	66%
Female	515	51%	621	34%
Not answered/prefer not to say	0		131	

Age group	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
Under 16	0	0%	7	0%
16 - 24	129	13%	69	4%
25 - 34	239	24%	163	9%
35 - 44	140	14%	394	21%
45 - 54	150	15%	306	16%
55 - 59	77	8%	134	7%
60 - 64	86	9%	180	10%
65 - 74	100	10%	345	18%
75 +	80	8%	276	15%
Not answered/prefer not to say	0		102	

Ethnicity	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
White or White British	840	86%	1542	85%
Asian or Asian British	77	8%	127	7%
Black or Black British	19	2%	46	3%
Mixed background	17	2%	40	2%
Other ethnic group	22	2%	58	3%
Not answered/prefer not to say	26		163	

Disability or long term health condition	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
Yes	124	13%	248	14%
No	860	87%	1572	86%
Not answered/prefer not to say	17		156	

Household type	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
Single adult no dependent child / children	191	19%	287	15%
Couple with no dependent child / children	305	30%	403	22%
Lone parent with dependent child / children	47	5%	81	4%
Couple with dependent child / children	257	26%	591	32%
Pensioner	93	9%	417	22%
Other	109	11%	82	4%
Not answered/prefer not to say	0		115	

Tenure	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
Owned outright	468	47%	898	49%
Owned with a mortgage or loan	271	27%	579	32%
Rented from council or Sutton Housing Partnership	66	7%	90	5%
Privately rented from a private landlord or letting agency	65	7%	158	9%
Rented from someone else	8	1%	32	2%
Other	118	12%	70	4%
Not answered/prefer not to say	0		149	

Employment	Telephone survey		Online/paper survey	
Working - full time (30+ hours)	442	44%	513	28%
Working - part time (8-29 hours)	146	15%	277	15%
Working (under 8 hours a week)	7	1%	23	1%
Self-employed	34	3%	91	5%
Housewife/husband	29	3%	97	5%
Retired	259	26%	673	36%
Registered unemployed	5	0%	17	1%
Unemployed but not registered	7	1%	15	1%
Permanently sick/disabled	6	1%	31	2%
On a training scheme	0	0%	1	0%
Voluntary work	7	1%	33	2%
Student	6	1%	59	3%
Full-time carer	6	1%	8	0%
Other	49	5%	26	1%
Not answered/prefer not to say	0		112	

Annex C: Text comments: If you think the Council should cut other services, please provide details

The telephone survey

65 people provided comments in the telephone survey about how the Council could make savings other than from the library service.

14 of those comments were about cutting staff costs from the Council generally, for example:

"Cutting the people who are on top, cutting their wages"

"Cut big wigs wages"

"Red tape too many people work in the council"

"Getting rid of the overpaid executives at work in the council and putting that money back into the library."

11 people suggested that the Council should cut wastage and become more efficient, for example:

"I believe the council should do a lean review"

"Hospitality budgets, councils expenses"

"Better management of council assets"

"Cut council administration, waste public money"

9 people suggested that benefits should be cut, for example:

"Housing Benefits, saving giving away school meals that are free and ensure that free meals go to Children that are genuinely in financial hardship"

"Think people should work for benefits, clean streets, so forth, if not ill"

"People who are not prepared to work, should be punished"

8 people made suggestions around waste collection, for example:

"There are 2 types of rubbish collection, they can do 2 in 1 instead of having 2 separate lorries"

"think brown bin could be done once a fortnight, recycle more"

"Bins taken once every two weeks"

There was 4 comments about closing the Life Centre and 7 people commented negatively on the redevelopment of Sutton High Street and town centre. 2 people suggested that no cuts should be made. Other comments were around MPs' and Councillors' pay and expenses, parks and grounds maintenance and highways.

The online/paper survey

384 people provided comments on this question in the online/paper survey. The main themes of the comments are around:

- Cutting wastage and making efficiencies

- Staffing costs and making use of volunteers
- The Life Centre
- Charging for services and generating income
- Sutton Town Centre and Hackbridge developments
- The payment of benefits and other support to specific groups

There are also smaller number of comments around: Councillors, the purchase of the new school site, the Worcester Park garden, refuse collection and recycling, and Children's Centres.

<u>Cutting wastage and making efficiencies</u>

Some of the 92 comments around cutting wastage and making the Council more efficient were non-specific in nature, whilst other people made specific suggestions about how money could be saved. Below are some examples of the comments made under this heading.

General non-specific comments:

"Be more efficient and cut any waste."

"Stop starting initiatives that get advertised with public money and then get abandoned."

"The Council should concentrate at all times (and not just in times of cuts) on delivering the maximum benefit with the resources available to it. It needs to be creative about funding something close or similar to the existing services but using fewer resources to do so."

Energy efficiency / utilities

"Perhaps the council should look at how it can cut cost in its utilities bills to save money? I often walk past the offices at night to see it empty but with some lights still on. This would make a significant saving on energy costs if lights were turned off when no one in the room."

"Turn street lights off at night - lots of other councils do it."

"Change all street lighting to LED"

"Reduce expenditure by turning heating down in Council buildings - most are too hot"

"Reduce utility bills by using solar energy in council buildings, schools etc."

Reducing spend on 'unnecessary or cosmetic' items

"No need to change road name signs just to say 'Conservational Area' within the Cheam area."

"Less on improvements such as flowerbeds on the pavements. They get shabby very quickly."

"Some of the activities in the High Street eg mini golf and deckchairs in the Summer should be paid for by sponsorship. No council funding."

"Get rid of the 'public realm' funding"

"I think the council should stop p.r. exercises like 'Take part, take pride' - they are a waste of money."

"Stop erecting so many road signs. 90% of them are irrelevant and a blot on the landscape."

"The Council has to spend all its money so as to obtain the next years budget from the government, if it does not spend it all , the remainder is spent on useless projects eg bricks lining Stafford Road pavement. Thousands of pounds are wasted by this system. If each department saved this money there would be plenty. It would need a change in the law."

"Twinning with other cities is no benefit to residents. In fact not many people know about this and it looks it is a perk for the people in the council."

Wastage on bureaucracy, administration etc

"Cut back on council wastage (duplicated letters, duplicated jobs, letters rapidly followed by retractions/cancellation/corrections)."

"Perhaps better proof reading/approval of letters to prevent the letter - retraction - correction letter chains which systems generate."

"Perhaps a reduction in the number of Council publications?"

Council 'extravagance'

"Celebrations and entertainment."

"Stop Council extravagance, e.g. the public enquiry a few years ago was held at the Holiday Inn - a cheaper venue could have been found."

"Corporate expenditure ie. lunches, taxis, trips abroad, lavish meals and ridiculous town centre show pieces, to name but a few."

<u>Staffing costs and making use of volunteers</u>

The majority of the 66 comments under this heading were around the savings that could be made by cutting the salaries of, in particular, senior staff. Some examples of those comments are below.

Cutting senior staff and staff salaries

"If you need to cut library funding cut the upper management of whom there are too many doing too little"

"Cut a top salary person on the Council which would provide enough money to keep the Mobile going"

"Perhaps a cut in the upper echelons of the Council in general and the library service in particular (there seem to be -to coin an old phrase - "Too many chiefs and not enough Indians")."

"Sorry but staff salaries from the top down are too high, literally mimimum pay increases must be the norm. New positions should be down graded if possible or avoided by merging duties"

"Eliminate, with immediate effect..The posts of 30-40% of senior and middle managers currently in Sutton Council's employment. Beyond recruiting professionally-competent

staff (which, if it's done properly, effectively makes the manager themselves largely superfluous), a significant minority of Council managers are effectively there pretty much because they're there, and are more or less hanging on for their pension (unless they're on bloated daily or hourly rates)."

"The cost of the remuneration packages for senior officers is too high. When all residents are having to deal with austerity measures, these officers should face similar cutbacks. It would seem that the negotiations for generous pay deals were decided before the budget cuts and have not been adjusted to reflect the reduced budget that the Council now has to administer. The council tax-payers simply cannot afford their generous salaries."

"Yes, dispose of some of the executives. Sack personnel who thought of Sutton Life Centre and the regeneration of Sutton shopping centre and the person who wants to spend £120k of our money on what can be done to make the place look nicer. Get a CEO and dispense with Ms Dombey's services."

"I think Councils should save money by paying their top earners less (max salary £45k and sustainable average £26k I suggest)"

"Your Chief Executive get £167k (more than the Prime Minister)"

"They could take a long hard look at existing staff where appropriate, for instance look at Social Services most of them temps why not employ permanent staff so continuity of cases could be upheld. Stop giving staff massive payouts and bringing them back on a consultancy basis. The report on SS was not good improvement needed. When staff are suspended deal with it not let it drag on either dismiss or reinstate who does their work?"

Use of consultants

"How about less money spent on consultants."

"Stop employing consultants to investigate savings when you are paying them more than what you are saving."

"In particular, stop employing consultants."

Using volunteers or contracting out services

"Set up more community voluntary services for residents to help each other."

"Cutting some money to libraries could work. Using volunteers at libraries can work. Stoneleigh library is completely manned by volunteers after the council decided to close it. I don't think Sutton needs to go so far, but I do think volunteers could help reduce the cost of running libraries. I don't think that Sutton has fully explored all its options in that area. In saying that, I also think that volunteers could also be used to help cut costs at children centres too."

"by being more choosy about contracting out services to private providers."

<u>The Life Centre</u>

There were 45 comments which mentioned making savings from the Life Centre, for example:

"Think of ways to try and make the Life Centre make money rather than lose it year in year out. It appears to be too costly to get rid of the building. Open the cafe for longer hours? Get rid of the library there? Is it well used?"

"stop spending on vanity projects like the Life Centre"

"The Life Centre is not sustainable. Since opening, it has failed to reach any income target or engage with enough local schools. Each year since opening, the running cost is examined and plans to increase income are put in place. Each year the Centre fails to achieve targets. The business and marketing plan was flawed from the beginning and the Centre should close."

"How about the Life Centre on Sutton Common Road? Why is that not included? It is much more of a drain on resources than the mobile library - but maybe more high profile? People in power don't want to admit it was a mistake so other services are to be sacrificed instead."

"Close Life Centre - complete disaster! Aldi or Lidl will pay for this site in a flash and keep a small library. Ridge Road should never have closed. Learn from your mistakes."

"Close Sutton Life Centre which has been a waste of money. The community hall previously there was well used and much more in character with the surrounding properties. Hardly any parking space, not well served by buses - dead loss all round."

"Closing the "Life Centre" would pay for a small library like Beddington to stay open. The land alone must be worth a fortune. It could be sold to a developer."

Charging for services and generating income

There were 29 comments from people who thought that the need for savings could be reduced by raising more funds through charging for services or through other forms of income generation. Some examples of those are below.

"1) Sell off any land at the council's disposal not currently used by the public (and not buy land until planning permission for projects is agreed on - see Belmont fiasco);
2) Sell energy/waste disposal services to other councils or bodies (now that we are to have the Viridor project we might as well profit from it);
3) Build up a fund over time which can used to invest in longterm revenue generating projects, so that the council has its own source of revenue, independent of council tax and government (e.g. housing schemes that are consistent with housing and planning policy in the borough);
4) Look at parking fees across the borough and increase charges in council owned car parks."

"Using libraries as advice centers, CABs, social service advice centres, council advice centres and run more courses that people were more than willing to pay for, ie IT, maths, english run by volunteers etc."

"Council should generate revenue by helping business to grow and building houses for more people to live and generate additional income."

"The council should sell real estate assets, and provide incentives for companies to locate in Sutton."

"Get take aways to pay more towards refuse services?"

"Charge for out of borough users of the library service, charge more for use of the internet computers etc."

"More fines for people who leave litter on the streets of the borough. More bins and publicity/education in schools regarding litter & cost of tidying up to tax payers."

"Is funding available from EU?"

Sutton Town Centre and Hackbridge developments

34 people felt that money has been wasted on updating Sutton Town Centre, Wallington and Hackbridge, for example:

"Stop spending ridiculous amounts of money on redesigning the centre of Sutton every few years only to decide you don't like it and redoing it all over again."

"Wooden animals in the high street are unnecessary and unsightly."

"Stop wasting money on High Street improvements that are not needed. A green wall for instance!"

"Eliminate, with immediate effect…any further expenditure by Sutton Council on expensive "vanity" projects such as the so-called landscaped area in Sutton High Street near Waterstone's bookshop."

"Stop spending on (improvements???) to the High Street which in the case of that which has already been done has not benefited us and in the case of some of the paving, for those of us not too mobile can be a hazard."

"Lose the shuttle that runs up and down Sutton High St - its only used as a novelty and not a true mobility tool?! Besides every bus runs that route around the one-way!"

"NO MORE CUTS!! The Council should stop wasting money on High Street Schemes. Wallington where its packed with cars parked on the pavement it is difficult to tell where the bays end and the pavement begins. Hackbridge where nobody knows if its a pedestrian crossing or not (the paved brick) areas. You had to go back to install a roundabout and Sutton where you spent all that money and it doesn't look any different. You didn't consult the public about spending all this money and was it worth it. Yet you ask us to make decisions regarding library services. The libraries in the boro' of Sutton are bad enough without more cuts."

"The Hackbridge/roundabout /crossings development has wasted lots of resources because it wasn't planned properly. I live in Hackbridge and don't know anyone who was consulted about it initially.anyone with any road sense could have seen it was badly designed.That's where you are wasting money."

"Stop wasting money on traffic schemes which make problems worse ie Sutton Gateway and Beddington magic roundabout at London Rd/Hackbridge Road junction."

The payment of benefits and other support to specific groups

There were a number of comments (46) that focused on benefits and expenditure on specific groups. Many of the suggestions for making savings are outside of the Council's remit.

"Cut benefits for people who refuse to work"

"subsidised accommodation for the employed has got to stop. Review support allowances to jobless large families"

"People on incapacity benefit. Pay them far less. It's disgusting what they do with tax payers money. Especially when a large perchentage are faking it"

"stop financial support to minority groups, e.g. gay, lesbian and transgender. Whilst diversity is to be applauded, it is the community as a whole which needs strategic services."

"I dont think free courses should be provided, through scola to people on benefits and from overseas. I dont think they should subsidise gym membership for people on benefits."

"I personally know many people who have all kind of benefits but they are capable of working. The whole Benefit System need to be re-assessed. The Council can save millions. There is a huge loop-hole in the system."

"Ensure disabled people are actually "disabled" before receiving benefits and lower the benefits to encourage people to go out and work!"

"Transport for spec. ed. needs. Loads get it by 'being economical with the truth' & don't need it. This is fact not supposition."

"Cut down on school children bus passes - only to be used between 7.00 am to 17.00 (school hours). 10 year olds on buses at 10 pm a joke!!"

"The council should not be expected to fund services for refugees / migrants. For central government to impose this and then expect other services to be cut is a travesty and reduction in the Human Rights of the indigenous population and must be challenged by all local authorities."

"Transport for children/managers attending PRU should be carefully scrutinised. Some go to school in cabs - and are then returned home by cab. This is fine if they need transport but many are dropped at home then catch the public bus into Sutton to meet friends."

"Remove all translation services for immigrants."

Other comments

Some examples of other suggestions for cutting costs are set out below.

Councillors

"the removal of expenses from councillors - in times past, a coucillor was an amateur, not a 'professional politician' - Councillor is NOT a full time job and the salary received should cover everyday expenses"

"With the existing professional executive Sutton could cut the number of elected Councillors"

"Cut the pay of councillors who voted for the incinerators in this area. Or is the council's way of slowly killing off its residents, hence the point of cutting services is moot!!."

"I suggest that we should dispense with some of the councillors. One MP so one Councillor per ward."

"Also Cllrs stipends, expenses, etc should be reviewed - if we are to cut Council Tax payers facilities then theirs should be cut also."

Purchase of new school site

"The Sutton Hospital site should be sold. It was acquired as the site for a new secondary school without clear mandate from Government to build the school on the site."

"Sell land purchased which is not suitable for purpose, eg land at Sutton Hospital site which is too small for the school intended for it!"

Refuse collection and recycling

"Fortnightly collection of brown rubbish with green."

"The Council should cut the weekly refuse collection - once a fortnight should be sufficient. If residents need a weekly service this indicates that they are
a) spending too much money on rubbish b) not recycling properly c) buying too many plastic goods - all three of which contribute to climate change."

"Refuse service - brown bins collection one a fortnight as happens in most areas. This might also lead to less landfill waste."

"I feel the brown bin collection could be reduced to one a fortnight in keeping with many other areas of the country. This would encourage more careful recycling strategies."

Children's Centres

"Children's centres/services reduced &/or closed. Visited many over the last few years they are very poorly attended and the Libraries could provide more story times/craft sessions to compensate."

"Could Children's Centres be incorporated into libraries?"

"Close down all but three Children's Centres."

"some of the childrens centres need to be reduced and more input from people who use them (parents) to participate in the running of the activites."

Annex D: Text comments: An alternative scheme for making savings

The telephone survey

38 people suggested alternative schemes in response to the question asking them to say which of the 6 options they thought would be most preferable.

10 of the comments were to say that more than one of the options should be implemented, and 9 people said that there should not be any cuts made. Other people re-iterated the comments made at the start of the survey by mentioning things like: closing the Life Centre, staff costs, and efficiency savings.

More specific comments about how the library service could be changed are:

> "Would be better to have one huge HUB library and also a mobile library for housebound. Also can do online library where volunteer can deliver books"

> "Keep mobile library close others"

> "Close all the libraries waste of time waste of money"

> "Ask people to pay small amount when they sign up to become a member"

The online/paper survey

Of the 186 people who provided comments in this section, many used the box to add further comments about one or more of the main options or simply to say that there should be no cuts to the libraries budget. Other themes in this section were similar to comments in the text box about where/how savings could be made with people mentioning things like:

- The Life Centre
- Charging for services and income generation
- Staffing issues and salaries

There were also comments around raising council tax, the possibility of closing other libraries, making better use of the library buildings and the co-location of services, the stock of books, and wastage. One person added a comment in support of keeping Beddington Library open and another person suggested that as a professional librarian, shortly to retire, they would be prepared to run the Library.

Reinforcing or clarifying options presented

Some examples of the comments which reinforced the options presented are:

> "Stopping the mobile library. when it stops near me no one uses it!! What a waste!!"

> "I think section 15 should allow more than one selection. So, close Beddington, stop the mobile library. Reduce late night openings at all libraries to, say, just one night per week (perhaps the same night as shops late nights - Thurs in Sutton). Maintain the services in house and with paid staff, perhaps sharing stock / books with other councils."

> "The Mobile library could be incorporated into the Housebound service. Most people do not schedule library visits so there is least value for money from the Mobile library, in my opinion."

"If you close Beddington Library, stop Mobile Library reduce opening hours and include some volunteers it should make a difference."

"Reduce opening hours, share with other councils AND set up a DIGITAL ONLINE library that supports the common book reader formats"

<u>No cuts</u>

14 people used this text box to suggest that cuts should not be made to the Library Service, for example:

"I do not believe the Council should be making reductions in the budget of the Libraries Service."

"I don't think an alternative scheme should be in place as I do not agree with making cuts to the service at all."

"This survey is skewed towards making cuts and therefore it appears the council has already made the choice to have cutbacks. I profoundly disagree this is a policy I feel is harmful to many people in the community and the long term harm is potentially very great."

"I think the library service should be left alone. Books are the greatest source of knowledge, pleasure relaxation, companionship, helping to avoid loneliness etc. And no doubt in today's troubled digital age which causes and is causing ever more problems now and more so in the future a book remains a truly trusted friend for everyone."

<u>The Life Centre</u>

Closing the Life Centre or reducing expenditure on it was also mentioned 23 times under this section:

"Why not not let a private company run the life Centre and lose the Chelsea fc expense"

"As the Life Centre lost £300,000 last year shutting it would help your funding problems"

"When are you people going to learn.. Just close the "Life Centre" in Sutton Common Road. Its lost money every year. Those in charge of the budget and who make decisions must be thick as shit."

"Close the life centre. I am a secondary school teacher in the borough and I consider it to be a waste of money taking our students there."

"Close the Liberal Democrat vanity project Life Centre, it's haemorraging money and no one uses it. It's costing council tax payers a fortune and the only reason it is still open is because the Council can't face up to admitting they're in the wrong. Get rid of it and we wouldn't need to cut any other library services. Stop playing politics with people's services. Do the decent thing and fall on your sword. Shame on you. Sutton Council is systematically destroying this borough because they're a bunch of ideological halfwits."

"Close the money losing life centre not the mobile library which is greatly loved by its users."

Charging for services and Income generation

Many people suggested that there should be a charge for library services and that money could be generated, for example through renting rooms and other facilities.

> "Also may consider charging for baby/toddler groups. They could rent the space to associations like music groups for babies"

> "Annual membership fee of £5. The price of a few cups of tea or coffee."

> "A short term solution is to rationalise the space required in Sutton Central Library, and rent out floors to generate an income on temporary basis. This model could also be replicated in all of your other premises."

> "You need a good marketing plan and event planning for the halls and rooms you have available in your centres, its well overdue. For example at the Life centre you could have the costs and get double the number of bookings you currently get."

> "collect small annual fee from people who can afford it. collect second books instead of buying books all new. Charge for other services - such as film renting, kids clubs & activities at half term and after school - which would attract pre-schoolers & parents but also older children."

> "Look at how the library can be a community resource that brings in additional revenue to support the core library service. (so the building may actually be open longer hours than it is now). For example Sutton Central has so Much wasted space that I'm sure it could bring in revenue for you, maybe bringing in to it voluntary or community groups that currently occupy space elsewhere (and maybe receive grant funding to support this). Or community performance arts and culture events. Or business networking events. Or consultations. See what activities the Holiday Inn hold, if you Mae the premises fit for purpose then you could compete with them as a more affordable venue."

> "I believe that the there is an enormous amount of space available in Sutton Central library and alternative/joint use could be applied with turning it into a Day Care Centre (on the ground floor) for the elderly or for a social space for children's services. There are so few Day Centres for the elderly which provide actual 'care' by trained staff. The best one is The Cheam Priory Day Centre and the Council should consider a joint venture with them to provide exceptional day care. The cost is largely payable by the clients at £36 per day. Given the very large amount of free space which is almost completely wasted on a daily basis the Council should give this idea some consideration."

> "Many school children use the library for its study facilities. Should schools contribute to the budgets given librarian staff had issues with discipline from some pupils from certain schools"

> "Asking Central Government to release extra funds or securing a weekly sum of income from the national lottery. Allowing libraries to make money from private ticket shows, etc."

<u>Staffing issues and salaries</u>

Some examples of the 11 comments around staffing and salaries are:

"There is no alternative scheme apart from leaving the library service to run and may be cutting the pay of certain people in the Council who earn way and above what they deserve."

"tap into corporate charitable giving - some companies allow workers to do voluntary work in the community or release some office-based non-library workers from the council to work in the public libraries on a rota basis shadowing permanent library staff"

"In addition to the ideas proposed I believe staffing levels can be reduced esp. given self checkout terminals."

"Paying top council wage-earners less, i.e. a max of £45k and average of £26k."

<u>Closing other libraries</u>

Several people have suggested that other libraries could be closed. For example:

"Close all the libraries and only keep the superb facility in Sutton. We have plenty of buses, trains, trams, taxis, good internet provision and good pavements and road to use. There is no need for any of the branch libraries these days."

"Libraries such as Cheam could have been incorporated in revamp of Cheam leisure centre as in Westcroft and Wallington. Having a more efficient delivery service feeding out of Sutton could reduce the size of local libraries. I think there scope to reduce library numbers and share with other councils at fringe of LBS."

"Why wasn't Cheam library put into Cheam Leisure Centre, like Carshalton library was when Westcroft was refurbished? Selling Cheam library would release much capital and having another library in a leisure centre would be useful in the community (thus not losing a library). Cheam also has Worcester Park library up the road, both serviced by a very good bus links using 4 different bus routes, including 3 x double deckers and one single decker, meaning lots more frequent transport for the people in this area."

"Maintain Sutton as the key central library and close more of the others, using the mobile library and expanding it to provide access to books for the wider community. This will free up buildings for development as well as reduce running costs substantially,but at the same time giving everyone service currently available , but at present much duplicated."

"Keep the Central Library, and Wallington but outsourced with a significant input by volunteers; close everything else."

"My suggestion: close all local libraries, releasing those Real Estate assets to sell or rent, capital for the Council to use. But keep Mobile Service for those areas and a central library."

"Close all libraries and issue people with e-readers - which would be free to the elderley, unemployed or vulnerable."

"Sell off Sutton library.   On the few occasions that I have been in there, no-one was looking at books."

Making better use of premises/co-location of services

There was some support for expanding the range of services provided by libraries, by making them more like community hubs, for example:

> "Libraries are focal points of communities and other services should be brought to where they are. ie emergency doctors services, post offices, social groups, community activities etc."

> "Libraries are a great resource within the borough but I'm not always sure that they're made the most of. Having a library at Westcroft was a brilliant idea, we now go here every week when my daughter has her swimming lessons - the Sutton Central Library was a bit of a trek for us and we'd only go specifically to go to the Library. Having libraries in shared public venues would appear to me to be the way forward, life today is all about convenience and ease of access. In my opinion, stand-alone libraries will become a thing of the past, they're too expensive for councils to run but combining with other public facilities (like leisure centres, and maybe community centres or health centres, or even what about as a "concession" in supermarkets must surely reduce costs)."

> "Have you thought about integrating some of the services provided by the council to also be based in the libraries, a bit like the Shine project. Thereby providing a location for all those people who use the library more of a community space rather than a place to get books"

> "Please look to see if we can COMBINE services, so that no one group loses out. Our libraries should be a SOCIAL HUB for the local community and could combine other local community support services offered (eg. elderly). Make the libraries the base venue that these groups all use, thereby saving on rent. Libraries play an important role, would hate to see them disappear."

Other Issues

Below are some examples of other comments under this question.

Stocks of books/ IT issues

> "Buying books second hand. I've bought numerous books on Amazon for a fraction of the price of new books and many have been as good as new."

> "collect second books instead of buying books all new."

> "Buying New books is very expensive - yet charity shops all over Sutton are selling modern books and classic books at a fraction of the costs"

> "A large amount of budget has clearly been spent on IT suites. Why?People can use I.T services at other venues, such as IT café's, educational establishments etc but primarily at home.Nobody has a library of the range and volume of books do they.Make savings to maintain core service."

> "Provide e-books to anyone who would like one and free online access to books instead of libraries."

Beddington Library

"Closing beddington library would be a big mistake.This little library serve lots of people in the local area, both old+very young.The opening hours are not much anyway , supported only by one staff,but it is an immensely valuable place for the people around and i think especially for the children to visit.There are a number of primary schools in the area with so many children around locally, this keeps the children fulfilled with knowledge for library books, we want to increase the chances of educating the future generation,not doing the opposite.Instead, we should promote beddington library, so that people can read more."

Annex E: Text comments: Other comments on the consultation

The final question of the online/paper consultation asked people to provide any other comments they would like to make on the consultation.

Over 800 people made comments in this section.

A large number (over 120) of the contributions were general positive comments about the importance of libraries. In addition, a similar number of people used this space to reaffirm that they did not think that cuts should be made to the library service. Other significant themes were:

- The use of volunteers and paid staff (there were opposing views about the use of volunteers with some welcoming increased use of the community while others were concerned about the effects on the service).
- Opening hours (again the comments were mixed – some in favour of reducing hours, some against)
- The mobile library (the majority of the comments were in favour of keeping it, but not all)

Other themes, with smaller numbers of comments, were around: the pros and cons of closing Beddington Library; making cuts in other ways (Life Centre, raising Council Tax, wastage and efficiency savings); charging and income generation; closing other libraries or focusing on the central library; the use of library buildings and co-location; and outsourcing/sharing services.

General positive comments

126 of the comments explained how important library services were to the people themselves or to the community as a whole. Examples of those comments are:

> "The libraries aren't just a place to borrow books, they are part of the soul of our community. Thanks to Sutton libraries, I made my first friends when I first moved in to the area, I've found out about services in the area, I was always received by friendly staff who made me feel secure and at home."

> "Our libraries are crucial to the civilisation and literacy of the community. I could not survive without the library service."

> "Our libraries are of superlative quality and a huge asset to the local community."

> "I think that the library is an essential service for young and old."

The use of volunteers and paid staff

There were 128 comments about volunteers and paid staff. There were arguments both for and against the use of volunteers, for example:

Concerns about the use of volunteers

> "Volunteers could help to run small branch libraries with paid staff or centre libraries when they are in self issue mode, but they are not as reliable and would not be able to deal with complex issues library staff now have to undertake ie; freedom pass applications, blue badges and revenue and benefit scanning."

"I honestly wouldn't like to see a library run exclusively by vonluteers! The librarians are an integral and important part of any good library. Their knowlegde and the help they offer us, library users, can't just be replaced by the good will of volunteers unless thise volunteers are also librarians."

"I feel very strongly that it shouldn't be volunteers running the library as this takes responsibility from the government and means people lose their jobs. Being a good librarian is a skill - don't most of them have degrees that specialise in it? They have a vast amount of knowledge and are brilliant at recommending books, authors etc... - this cannot be replaced by a volunteer."

"I am a user of Merton's libraries too, and have found the quality of volunteers to be varied; whilst it seems positive, I believe it's essential that they are properly qualified and trained, as I have witnessed some who cannot cope with the demands of the public and have been rude and unhelpful as a result."

"The Library needs to be run by fully qualified librarians. It's not fair to make any of them redundant and it undermines the profession. Volunteers can be a great help tidying shelves and shelving books which have been returned also clerical jobs i.e. helping to process new books (sticking bar codes etc in and jacketing books) looking after the photocopiers tidying notice boards etc etc."

"Completely against the idea of community involvement/volunteers to run libraries. Such an idea cheapens libraries and the profession of being a librarian. If volunteers can run libraries, then I put it to the Council that they could run all services!"

"Using volunteers in the library service would be a big mistake, if they don't turn up the run the library the library will stay closed so no service!"

Comments in favour of the use of volunteers

"It seems absolute common sense to empower communities to manage library services. Maintained and managed by the Council and face to face services offered by volunteers."

"Set a scheme up for young people to be volunteering in the libraries, possibly as part of Duke of Edinburgh."

"Middleton circle could be run by volunteers, as could Cheam library. Phoenix and Wescroft libraries could be placed in self service with reduced staff hours. Life centre library could be run with staff combined from centre staff (majority of them were previously library staff)."

"Unemployed people/people seeking work should be made to volunteer, even just for a few hours a week, in their local library."

"It would be great if the council could use the libraries as a tool to train up NEETS or unemployed people to run a service to gain employability skills for themselves."

"If volunteers are to provide services, I think a scheme should be introduced to provide tax credits according to the time spent working without compensation. (e.g. £10 in tax credits per hour)."

"Also mental health patients looking to get back to work could benefit from volunteer opportunities in libraries - liaise with local mental health services (voluntary and NHS)."

General comments about staff

"I often see two librarians at the desk at the Circle library and it really does not require two people, considering they don't actually check the books in and out- save money on salaries and cut them down to one person per shift, or at least one paid person per shift."

"The current staff that you have in your libraries are extremely helpful and polite. It is because of these staff members that we return to the library."

"Most of your front of house library staff are not qualified because you can't afford it and I'm afraid they are not knowledgeable people. They deliver a perfunctorily pleasant enough service but I believe that isn't good enough. Nevertheless the population at large believes they don't need libraries and librarians to mediate in their knowledge gathering - Google, Wikipedia and Amazon have deluded people into thinking they can navigate the world of information by themselves."

"The libraries are a valuable commodity. Please do not cut the service. Perhaps the existing staff could work more efficiently and harder. I have encountered some useless library staff."

"Intelligent and experienced librarians are essential in running a Library service. Sutton council are so fortunate in the staff that they currently have, they contribute so much to the pleasure of using the library and are so willing to help with any queries one might have."

"Libraries are overstaffed. I have often observed staff chatting about personal matters."

"The council should treat library staff as the valued members of their workforce that they are. They often go above and beyond their Job Descriptions to help people and are left demoralised by the constant threat of job losses."

Issues around changes to opening hours

There were 114 comments about the proposal to change opening hours. Many of the comments were broadly against reducing opening hours, others were in favour although sometimes with some caveats.

Comments broadly against changes to opening hours

"Cutting an hour a day may not be too bad, but closing for whole days or cutting hours drastically will mean that other council services are also reduced, like benefit scanning or applying for a freedom pass, both of which I have done at the library."

"The libraries do not open enough eg Sundays, Wallington is shut on Mondays. ..long weekend every week for staff!! They should do a full week, like every one else has to. With no extra pay!! They have had it too easy for too long...."

"Keep more than one library open on a Sunday so they are available to people who are at work during the week"

"Longer branch opening times are too beneficial to people working and studying, so should be more of a last resort."

"One of the main reasons I use the library service is to take my daughter (5) into Wallington to read books after school…If the hours of Wallington library are reduced it

will be harder and harder to find times to do these trips, and that will reduce her chance to learn to read better, and to read more diverse books. We cannot simply go into Sutton after school as this takes more time, and will make her more tired. It would be a great shame if she were effectively deprived of her local library on a number of days, just as she is getting to read for herself."

"Reducing hours would mean employed people would not be able to use this service. Also school children would not be able to come into the library to do there homework and read with there parents."

"Re: Opening hours. The library needs to be open in the areas where people live in the evening. Sutton Central is an office and shopping centre, not needed in the evening."

"It makes no economic sense to keep beddington library open, but wallington library should be kept open without any reduction in hours.In an ideal world, the wallington branch should be open on Mondays too. How silly on a working day in the busy town to have no access to library services on Mondays !!"

"Fully consult with individual library users about changes to opening hours. Encourage them to offer a timetable of opening hours that would work.The proposed changes seem too dramatic with total closure on same days and little change on others."

"I strongly object that Sutton library is allowed to open 7 days a week; other libraries have to close 2 days a week also Sutton library is open later."

Comments in favour of changes to opening hours

"We are lucky to have so many libraries in Sutton. We should try to maintain this with the use of volunteers and also by restricting hours of opening in those quieter libraries."

"Speaking as someone with social isolation problems, the library provides a very valuable service as well as outside human interaction. I think that providing daily library services at Sutton Central is essential even if that means that there are no other branches open on a Monday."

"Reducing opening hours for a couple of hours each day could be a solution, meaning library staff (part-time) can still earn a wage which will only help the local economy and thus ensuring library access during the day."

"Library total opening hours possibly don't need to change but some more later opening hours would be good."

"I am puzzled by the proposal to close all libraries except Sutton on Fridays. Staggering closing days would give people the option of going elsewhere if they wanted something urgently on the day their usual branch were closed. And wouldn't staggering the closing day enable more efficient deployment of staff?"

"I would have no objection to all the libraries having their opening hours reduced as it is easy for me to use them when they are open. However, the computer availability should be maintained as much as possible as they are very heavily used."

"Why does Sutton library have to have such extended hours compared with all other libraries in the borough? Could they not be reduced and brought in-line with all others to save a small amount of money?"

"It may be very difficult, or time consuming, for people to have to travel elsewhere for these resources, so closing any library is putting the local users at a disadvantage. Reduced opening hours at each library seems a fairer option for all users of the service, although carefully tailored according to demand."

"I read in the council committee report that it is proposed to reduce the number of hours that Sutton Central library is open on Saturdays. Would the Council please consider shutting the upstairs library at 6pm on either Tuesday or Wednesday nights so that the library could remain open for the current number of hours on Saturdays. Sutton Central library (upstairs) is not heavily used after 6pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It is more heavily used on Saturdays."

"I think it's sensible to consider cutting the opening hours of Sutton's libraries but it would be preferable if the cuts could be made in a way that ensures that when one Library is shut a nearby one is open. So, for example in my own area, if Worcester Park Library were to be shut on a Tuesday but Cheam Library were to be open, then that would at least allow someone living in the area to go to Cheam Library instead. But please don't base such decisions purely on distance between libraries without regard to public transport. For example, the library at the Sutton Life Centre and Cheam Library are both about the same distance from Worcester Park Library but it is far easier, via public transport, to get from Worcester Park to Cheam Library."

The Mobile Library

There were 116 comments about the Mobile Library, the vast majority of which were in favour of retaining that service. For example:

Comments in favour of retaining the Mobile Library

"The staff running the mobile libraries are amazing - helpful & friendly - something some of the Central Library staff could learn from! The mobile library is an essential part of the community particularly for the elderly & for capturing the imagination of the very young. At our library stop the children are falling over themselves on a Saturday afternoon to hop on & choose their books!"

"The Mobile Library is a vital outreach service that seems to be considered by the Council as an easy target for cuts. Removing this service would have an adverse effect on the vulnerable groups of people it serves, the same groups that the Council so often claims to support, particularly the elderly, the disabled and parents with young children."

"I am disabled and the only way I can lend books is from the Mobile Library. It comes right to where I live. I would be lost without it. Please do not stop this service its to good a service to stop."

"I am a mother of two young children. I use the mobile library service every week. It is a very good service provided by the council specially for young mothers and elderly people. I would appreciate if this scheme to continue in the future."

"The mobile library is an essential service for many 'remote' areas of Sutton, not all areas have good transport links as stated in the Guardian...Beddington North with the loss of the mobile and Beddington would really put tax paying residents at a loss of a local service..."

"I think mobile libraries are a very important part of the community which is used by children as well as the older generation. Ours is also a meeting point where if somebody is "missing" we want to know why!"

"Stopping the mobile library : the Housebound Library service has recently changed to volunteer staffing. I would therefore query the wording in the questionnaire 'to ensure that services continue for people who are unable to leave their home' - the service may continue but at an arbitrary level depending on the quality of volunteers as opposed to the consistently high level provided by mobile library staff. This is not fulfilling one of the 4 key aims identified in the Library Strategy agreed by the Council in January 2015 ie 'meeting the needs of an ageing population'."

"As a person who has regularly used the mobile library, I think it's disgusting that you are considering stopping this service..... the librarians would lose their jobs and they provide an outstanding service to the community. My mother is housebound with Parkinson's and dementia, one of the few bright spots of her week was a visit from the lovely Sean & Janice with books that they took the time and effort to choose, knowing what she would enjoy, now she gets the housebound service and she misses the one on one interaction. Me, I've used the mobile service since 2003 and my children were born, my kids gave grown up going to the library van and Sean & Janice have encouraged their love of books and reading, helping them choose appropriate books and I feel that my kids have benefited greatly from this service."

"I am expressing my views from a position of bias. My mother is 94 and blind and uses the mobile library which comes to her complex once a month. She gets the speaking books. I am sure that the many disabled people in the borough would regret the disappearance of the mobile library."

"Use the mobile library, by increasing its stops i.e. filling in for Beddington Library if it is closed. If necessary having it come fortnightly, rather than weekly if it has a larger volume of stops to cover. This service is vital for elderly and more disabled people who can't get out to library and carry books back."

"Being disabled the closure of the mobile library would effectively make library services non-existent."

"Registered blind. Can't do without Mobile Library and wonderful staff."

"Us pensioners have paid in the past so why take away the mobile library."

"May be sharing the mobile library with an adjoining council could also be considered."

"Where would we be without the happy smiling faces of those on the Mobile library.They know what we want and provide much more than just books. You are breaking promises- members of the council assured me that the mobile library service would not be cut and its continuation was assured."

"Close local libraries and utilise the mobile service for those additional requirements."

Comments in favour of stopping the mobile library

"I think community volunteers could be well used if they replaced the mobile library by taking books out to people who struggle to get to the libraries."

"I think consideration should be given to closing the Mobile Library. Sutton is an urban London borough with plenty of local libraries which are well used and should be supported in preference to the Mobile Library."

"A London borough doesn't need a mobile library service"

"Perhaps better use of technology could make savings with the mobile library, if enough users had the use of a tablet or similar device. A community library could also replace the mobile library on a smaller scale for those who still require hard copies."

Beddington Library

36 people made comments about Beddington Library, most of them were against the closure but some were in favour.

Comments against closing Beddington Library

"Beddington is the poorest served of all areas of the London Borough of Sutton and closing the library which provides a community resource for residents is a mistake. Local residents have lost their post office and their area is being completely industrialised."

"Beddington Library is critical to the wellbeing of the local community, and brings vital footfall to the shops. There are no other libraries within walking distance. Beddington Library is a rare jewel in Beddington's crown."

"If library hours have to be reduced, it would be better for each library to lose a few hours on different days of the week rather than close Beddington Library"

"Opportunities to share Beddington Library space with other services or businesses is an option that does not appear to have been explored fully."

"As a professional librarian for over 30 years, I am intending to retire within the next 2 years, ie 2017. I would be very keen to run Beddington Library on a voluntary basis."

"My concern at closing Beddington is perhaps that due to it being a less affluent area"

"I think it would be a real shame to close Beddington Library. I use it a lot, and also a lot of elderly people use it, they would be left having to go to Wallington or Carshalton."

Comments in favour of closing Beddington Library

"Altho reluctant to agree to closing Beddington Library, there is an excellent bus service straight to Wallington Library."

"Now with better bus services and the Carshalton library a little further in Beddington direction perhaps that library could be sacrificed."

"Having worked in both Sutton and Merton Library Services, I am amazed that Beddington Library is still open. It was very poorly used when I worked in Sutton 18 years ago."

"It makes no economic sense to keep beddington library open"

Making savings in other ways

As with other text-based questions, there were many comments about the Life Centre. Most of the these were negative, but there were a few positive comments. Other people suggested other ways to make savings.

Closing the Life Centre

> "But the real question is why is the Sutton Life Centre not being sold to pay for the essential community hubs?"

> "Close the Life Centre altogether. An obvious choice but strangely missing from any options presented. The vanity project did not work and is financially crippling other services which are working."

> "There are to many libraries in the borough, the life Centre is costing to much"

> "Why are you intent on Beddington & the mobile library? There are other much more expensive ones like the Life Centre nr Glenthorne which cost more & are loved less than the mobile library."

Supporters of the Life Centre

> "I feel the Sutton Life Centre is an admirable addition to the Borough's facilities. It is a place for community groups to meet, people to use the computer facilities. students to study and people to avail themselves of the library facilities."

> "Don't shut the life centre"

> "Sutton Life Centre is extremely important to me, my family and many others. Without this library, great staff and extended opening hours it would be impossible for my daughter and many other children, without computers at home to ever complete their homework."

Other ways to make savings

> "How about adding another Banding to Council Tax, so that the better-off pay a fairer share? (I believe they do that in Wales)."

> "Councils must raise tax bands on properties or create new ones. This has not been done since 1992?? (Why)?? Property in parts of the borough has rocketed many times. This is a fair way to fund vital services on assets that have appreciated rapidly while people sit on their arses!"

> "The Council offices should be consolidated under one roof. What a waste of the taxpayers money whilst you have offices in Denmark Road and also small offices in the Green."

> "Look at heart of Hackbridge, what an epic disaster. We told you not to remove our crossings, you went and did it anyway and now people are getting run over and the Law is telling you to put our crossings back, effectively wasting thousands of pounds. Look at the new school fiasco, even your own feasibility study is telling you to build it in Rose Hill, both MPs are telling you to do it and because the Leader has her constituency there she's vetoing the decision. Stop playing politics with the lives of residents. You are destroying this town."

"There is enough money, it is lost in waste and some bad choices & also because money from different organisations cannot be exchanged e.g. St Helier Hospital employed a small business which claimed to successfully get people off drugs against all good advice - they spent a great deal of money on them - they were a con. There needs to be more time spent on checking and research before money is wasted - also what is saved put in a scheme that can be used where needed."

Charging and income generation

The comments under this question about charging for services and generating income largely repeat issues raised under other questions, for example:

"I feel that an effort should be made in targeting people who are self employed who draw a low salary and claim council tax subsidiary. I also feel that charging for services (similar to green waste scheme) is a better alternative to cutting budgets. Removing services and cutting jobs just to save money is not a responsible way to manage the situation."

"it would be helpful to know how many people use the library facilities to know what a £5 membership would bring in. Also what hours the library is not used much to better decide how many hours could be cut. What income does the selling of books bring in and would doubling it make a difference? Of course every penny counts too!"

"Libraries are now only for the few - they should pay to use."

"Could the space in the libraries be hired out to other community groups or private companies, there could be business spaces / meeting rooms. This could be inside and outside of library opening hours."

"The council could set up a company to run popular fiction of new books on a subscription basis without infringing the statutory right to operate a free lending service."

Closing other libraries and focusing on Sutton Central

There were several comments about closing other libraries and focusing more on Sutton Central Library:

"From what I've seen over the past few years Cheam Library is not as busy as it once was, its hours could be cut, or indeed the library closed, without the impact of other options."

"Sutton Central library opening hours need to be extended - I propose shortening hours or closing more smaller libraries altogether than just Beddington."

"The report given at the committee meeting September 17 ranks libraries on key indicators & identifies Cheam as the next potential candidate for closure after Beddington - this possibility could be explored if working with another borough does not yield results."

"Rather than close this [the Mobile Library] down, the council should shut other libraries and then residents could use the mobile library instead."

"There are good public transport links in this area so the closing of some libraries makes sense."

"Given that the Borough is well-served by public transport, I think there is a strong argument in favour of providing better services at fewer locations rather than a "salami-

slicing" approach of spreading resources thinly across multiple locations (i.e. having a local library which is closed most of the time). Another factor which is not addressed in the survey but clearly pertinent is site value. I notice that the Circle library is the third most expensive in terms of running costs and has lost almost half its visitors since 2007. While I appreciate that it is in one of the more deprived areas of the Borough, it does seem to be used mainly for internet access. Given that increased community involvement (and shorter opening hours) would be unlikely to stem the fall in visitor numbers, I think the option of closing this library should be considered. The savings made could be used not only to maintain opening hours at other branches and improve the Housebound service, but also to provide dedicated internet facilities at the Circle library site or at an alternative location in the area, perhaps in partnership with an external provider."

"Concentrate resources on the one site for economies and to avoid duplication. Sutton must be on open fully on a Monday. There also needs to be a greater provision of workstations with power points in Sutton and an improvement to the quality of the wifi.

Use of buildings and co-location of services

Some examples of the 41 comments about making fuller use of library buildings are:

"The consultation is insular and only looks at Sutton, there are good examples of Libraries being strengthened across London, for example Enfield Library was re-built and re-designed using the space better and at that Library has people and community groups in it all the time. Sutton Library contains a lot of unused or poorly utilized space, it is not a friendly place, it is not geared up to modern needs."

"The libraries are a huge resources have you considered. Using the spaces for other services. For example some of the children centre services could be run from the central library. The huge space on the main floor used for exhibitions could be used to run groups etc… There is a huge shortage of after school clubs/nursery places the libraries could offer space for some of these with formal homework clubs etc… The libraries should be viewed as a resources from which other services could be run/incorporated not closed."

"Further exploration should be made to offer libraries in facilities already existing, such as leisure centres etc, so that overheads are kept to the minimum."

Outsourcing/sharing services

There were 31 comments about outsourcing and sharing services, the majority of the comments about outsourcing were negative but there was some support for sharing services with another council. Some examples of the comments are:

"I believe the council needs to retain responsibility for delivering library services, there are hidden costs (to society) if services are removed. Sharing services with another council to achieve economies of scale could be a good move if managed carefully with each council remaining responsible for delivering services to it's citizens. This could be especially true for the mobile service that I believe serves the most vulnerable"

"There may be scope for sharing with another council(s) but I think that should only be considered if the other council(s) had the same approach - provided it was not outsourcing."

"I also think combining library services with adjacent boroughs makes sense, the potential to reduce overheads and high paid management exists as well as benefits of scale in purchasing services."

"Since it is no longer run by the council, Croydon library service has become really awful - lots of missing and lost books, shelves a mess, not many events, just poor and Sutton looks like it's going the same way which is a real shame."

"On no account should the service be outsourced because all this does is get the workers to subsidise the service by being forced to take lower wages or worse conditions of service - Outsourcers can only make a profit which they will wish to do by reducing service and staff conditions"

"I know librarians who work for a library where the control has been outsourced, they are extremely unhappy because their jobs are dreadfully insecure, there have been many redundancies at the hands of people who are not that knowledgable of the workings of a library. Librarians are worth better treatment than that!"

Annex F: Note of the open public meeting

Library Consultation Public Meeting:

Saturday 14th November 2015

Summary

The public meeting was attended by around 40 members of the public.

The main options proposed for discussion at the meeting were the use of volunteers and community groups; outsourcing services; and sharing library services with another council. There was, however, space for people to discuss and raise any other issues of concern to them.

The meeting allowed time for group discussions among the attendees and they were encouraged to put their thoughts, comments and questions on Post-It notes under the main options. There was then a plenary session where attendees were able to comment and ask questions of the panel made up of Members and Senior Council Officers.

Overall, the attendees were very positive about the quality of the service currently being provided by Sutton's libraries.

There were several contributions – both written on Post-it notes and in the Q&A – in favour of retaining the Mobile Library, with the adverse effects of stopping that service on elderly residents highlighted. There were also concerns about the 'digital revolution' and the impact on elderly people who did not have internet access.

While there was general support for using volunteers, many participants made it clear that volunteers should not be used as substitutes for paid, professional librarians, who were highly valued.

There was some agreement that sharing services with another council was something that should be considered, but there was less support for outsourcing library services to a private company.

Some of the attendees felt that the consultation generally, and the meeting in particular, had not been sufficiently widely advertised. This is despite the process being communicated in many different ways: press notices were issued; Sutton's Future and links to the survey (where the meeting was highlighted) appeared prominently on Sutton's website; an A5 postcard about the Sutton's Future consultations – including the libraries one - was sent to all households in the borough; posters and the consultation documents were displayed in all of the libraries; a Sutton's Future newsletter was emailed to people who had registered with Sutton's website and the online panel; and a link to the survey was sent to all library users for whom we had a email address. Local Committee community representatives are automatically invited to these consultation events, which offer scope for a fuller discussion than could be accommodated at a Local Committee meeting.

Public Meeting: 14th November

Attendees:

Panel members:

Councillor Penneck, lead councillor for Libraries (Chair)
Councillor Whitehead, chair of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee
Madeline Barratt, Head of Libraries, Heritage and Arts
Jan Underhill, Executive Head of Wellbeing, in the People Services Directorate.

37 members of the public (who signed in)
Councillor Pascoe, Belmont
Councillor Butt, Carshalton South and Clockhouse
Tom Brake MP

Introduction from Councillor Penneck

Councillor Penneck opened the meeting by outlining the background to the consultation. It is part of the wider Sutton's Future programme which is looking at ways for the Council to find savings. The amount of savings needed is likely to increase as a result of the upcoming Spending Review.

Over recent years the Council has successfully reduced costs by, for example:

- Making back-office savings
- Sharing services
- Making changes to front-line services such as Garden Waste and the Theatres.

Further savings are now needed and the Council is currently removing the subsidy on the Life Centre and consulting about changes to Children's Centres and Youth Services. £1m of savings are needed from the Library service.

The consultation is running until mid-December and proposals will be put to the Environment and Neighbourhoods Committee in February.

Councillor Penneck reminded the audience that any future developments in library provision would be in line with the Library Strategy which had four key themes:

- Literacy – growing readers of the future
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Narrowing the digital divide
- Ensuring that the service is viable, sustainable and affordable.

He explained that the Council was committed to the library service and was trying to find ways to make savings without major closures or significantly reducing opening hours. As part of the move to implement the Library Strategy, more space was being made available in libraries for IT, study space and children's activities and, as a result, there would be less space made available for shelves of books.

The discussion at the meeting was going to cover three main areas:

- Making more use of volunteers and community groups
- Commissioning or outsourcing services
- Sharing library services with another council.

Explanation of the options by Madeline Barratt

Madeline Barratt explained that the options for discussion had been considered by the Arts Council England.

Volunteers and community groups

There are several different models for community involvement in libraries:

- Independent community libraries – these are where the library is handed over to the community, for example a non-profit-making organisation, and the community would hold the asset. Under this model, the library would not be linked to the main library systems. An example of this model is in Lewisham.
- Partnerships:
  o Community managed - There would be some council input, but the community would provide the majority of the staff. The community would not own the buildings and the library would be outside of the library network.
  o Community supported – there would be volunteer support, but the Council would still have considerable input.
  o Commissioned service – the library would be run by a non-profit-making organisation and would have paid members of staff. An example of this is GLL running libraries in Greenwich.

Commissioning or outsourcing libraries

This model is where the library would be run by a private company under a contract with the Council. The private company would pay dividends to shareholders. An example of this is in Croydon where Carillion run the libraries.

Sharing services with another council

Sharing library services with one or more other councils allows for economies of scale. Bexley and Bromley currently share services, as do Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Hammersmith & Fulham.

Other councils have formed a 'purchasing consortium' to get economies of scale. Sutton is in the process of joining the London Libraries Consortium.

Overall picture

Across the country, there are very few independent libraries (around 5% of the total). Commissioned libraries make up around 15% and community managed and community supported libraries each make up around 40%. 4 authorities are run by private companies and 14 are run by charitable trusts.

Break Out Post-It exercise

The audience was invited to break into groups to discuss the options. They wrote comments and questions on post-it notes and put them up against the options at four stations.

The comments and questions made on the post-it notes are at **Appendix A**.

Under the heading 'Increased volunteer and community group involvement', the main themes of the comments were that there was a need to retain professional paid staff, and that there were concerns about recruiting, managing, and training volunteers.

Comments on the outsourcing model focused on whether the quality of the service could be maintained, and whether outsourcing represented good value for money.

Most of the comments about sharing library services with other councils were positive although there were concerns about the quality of the service and its long term viability.

10 of the comments in the 'other' category were in favour of keeping the Mobile Library. In addition, there were other comments on charging for services or generating income, proposals for other ways in which the Council could make savings (including closing the Life Centre or other libraries), and comments on the consultation itself.

Question and answer session

Councillor Penneck invited questions from the attendees.

The first person to speak prefaced his comments by saying that he had lived in Roundshaw for 36 years. He said that he was worried about cuts repeatedly being made to library services as in the future there would no longer be a service. He suggested that making changes to the Mobile Library and smaller branch libraries would be avenues for savings. He used the library every day and stressed that the library was very important as there were no other community facilities in the area: if the library went from Roundshaw, then there would be nothing left. He implored the council to make the right decisions about the library service.

There were then a group of questions and comments about the Mobile Library.

An 85 year old lady stressed the importance to her of getting talking books from the Mobile Library as she lived on her own in a Warden-controlled flat. In response, Madeline Barratt confirmed that there were no proposals to stop providing talking books and that there were growing numbers of volunteers visiting people in their own homes. Madeline suggested that the lady should speak to one of the library staff at the end of the meeting if she had any difficulties.

Another attendee said that the Mobile Library was a godsend for the elderly. Books were heavy to carry and the Central Library was not easily accessible, particularly from the North. Another person commented on the statistic that over 30% of the Mobile Library users also used another library by stating that that meant that it was the only library service for over 60% of users. She said that elderly people could not always get to a library and that volunteers for the housebound service are not an adequate replacement as they are not trained library staff. Madeline Barratt replied that there were two types of volunteers: the first work with library staff and choose the books; the second are the drivers who deliver the books. The drivers also deliver Meals on Wheels so are used to providing services to people in their own homes. Jan Underhill added that the volunteers get training on spotting wider problems that people may be experiencing and that this was another way of ensuring that people are receiving the right services.

The scope of the housebound service was questioned as people might be able to leave their home to get to the van, but would not be able to attend their nearest library. Madeline Barratt confirmed that the housebound service covers people who are unable to access a library, not just those who are housebound.

The sentiments of earlier contributors about the Mobile Library were endorsed by another attendee who said that, in many cases, the Mobile Library provided people's only contact with the outside World.

Councillor Butt said that the Mobile Library had a therapeutic value in that users could meet friends and discuss books with librarians. Volunteers would not have the same level of knowledge about books as the librarians, so we would lose a lot by closing the Mobile Library.

An attendee asked whether the Council would purchase the lease of the Mobile Library once it ended in May. Madeline Barratt confirmed that the lease for the van was coming to an end but said that she did not know of any other authorities which had gone down the route of owning a Mobile Library. Purchasing it would not represent value for money: the van was 7 years old and there would be ongoing maintenance costs and further costs to update the IT provision in the van. It was suggested that the Mobile Library's IT was minimal in that it only had one laptop.

The conversation then moved on to more general issues.

The next speaker said that she was there to support the library service. There was a huge resource of highly trained people at the libraries and that, in terms of research and finding information, she would be quite lost without them. While it was wonderful to have volunteers and they were important to the service, it was essential to retain paid professionals.

The next person to speak was a member of the "University of the Third Age". She made the point that libraries were an important part of the community and that a good library is the best thing any community can offer. Libraries depend on the knowledge and skills of the staff: no volunteer can replace professional staff.

One attendee asked how the Council could guarantee the universal provision of library services required by the Act if we were to have community-led libraries. Libraries were not just about space and books. They were about information and provided a range of services. Sutton should already be part of the London Consortium. Libraries could provide other services such as tutoring, citizen's advice and computer repair and do more to rotate stock and make the best use of resources and staff. Not everything is on the internet and many people do not know how to search for information. Skilled librarians are therefore essential and dispensing with them would be a terrible mistake. Libraries are not just about providing services they are about giving people access.

In response to these comments, Madeline Barratt said that volunteers were being used to enhance services. The libraries are providing a large range of services and were intending to increase them. In terms of digital skills, libraries were supporting people, for example, through the Freedom Passes and Blue Badges procedures. Sutton was in the process of agreeing with the CAB an arrangement for them to provide signposting and other advice. Jan Underhill mentioned the requirements of the Public Libraries Act and said that this was open to discretion and provided lots of flexibility. Sutton has not forgotten the aim to provide a consistent and good service.

The next contributor said that libraries had been set up, and had an ongoing role, as education facilities. He questioned why the library budget was being cut when those of primary and secondary schools were not. He also suggested that decisions on the purchase of land in Belmont and on the Life Centre had not been value for money. In response to those points, Councillor Penneck explained that the schools budget is set by national government and that the Council is not able to change it; that the Belmont Hospital site will be used for a new secondary school; and that the subsidy to the Life Centre is being withdrawn.

Tom Brake MP spoke to say that, while he supported the full range of library services, which were very effective, the reality was that budgets had to be cut. He said that he would hate the council to lose track of priorities such as tackling poor literacy.

A community representative was critical of the consultation generally and of the fact that he had not previously seen the consultation document. He asked why it had not been sent to him for further dissemination. He also suggested that the documents and presentation were too vague as there was no sense of how much of a saving some of the options would make. A local businessman said that the presentation had been good and that it was important to get the views of young people, schools, colleges and parents.

A teacher commented that Sutton used to have a nationally award-winning library service but that something has gone wrong. He alluded to management issues and wrong decisions in the past and said that it was important not to just focus on the status quo. Young people access and consume information in a different way to older people (he mentioned that students now routinely photographed writing on a blackboard rather than taking notes) and it was therefore important to engage with the digital revolution. He said that some of the IT was inadequate and that he had sometimes struggled to find a librarian or library assistant who was able to provide suitable technical assistance and had been surprised at a lack of knowledge of CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information professionals). He felt that Sutton's libraries were fire-fighting rather than leading.

Jan Underhill explained that this was a consultation about high level ideas aimed at getting people's views broadly on the different models. Once we had a feel for the most acceptable way forward, more detailed financial analysis and modelling would be done in time for the final decisions. Madeline Barratt explained that as she had only joined the council in June, she was not in a position to comment on past management. She confirmed that modernisation was on the agenda of the libraries management team and that they recognised the need to upgrade IT equipment. She wanted Sutton libraries to be the best in London again, but that could not happen overnight. In terms of getting the views of young people, Madeline Barratt explained that they were having specific sessions with schools and groups of young people, and had not therefore expected a large representation of young people at this event.

Councillor Whitehead confirmed the elected member support for the libraries. At a meeting at the House of Lords, the principles behind the library strategy – for example, improving the digital divide and meeting the needs of an ageing population – had been discussed. Libraries were no longer just about books and there were decisions to be made about how they were run and by whom. The Government was requiring all councils to reduce budgets. £11 m had been saved so far through the Sutton's Future programme this year alone and changes had been made to green garden waste, and the theatres. The challenge now was to find solutions for the libraries.

Daigan Reid from the Sutton Youth Parliament was invited to say something from young people's perspective. He explained that he did not have anything previously prepared as he

had come to the meeting while shadowing Tom Brake MP. He said that he had used several libraries in the borough - notably Sutton Central and Wallington - and that the atmosphere of a library was particularly important as that was what draws people in. He acknowledged that he did not use books that often, although others did, and said that, for him, quiet study space and IT facilities were most important. The study space was always packed with students in May and June during exam time and the presence of well-trained library staff was crucial during that period.

A second community representative spoke next. He said that he did not agree with any cuts being made. He asked about the savings that would be made by closing Cheam Library and asked about the feasibility of video links between library users and librarians. If the budget has to be cut, then the answer would have to lie in centralisation.

Another attendee said that many members of the older generations could not do things online. She mentioned as an example a meeting at Age Uk when only a handful of the 60 people present were able to get information from Twitter or Facebook. She had registered for a course on basic computer literacy and there was a long waiting list. She asked how she could find out about computer courses and what the Council was going to do for older people who do not use computers. She closed her comments by saying that she received a fantastic service from the Mobile Library, whose staff knew her by name, and did not want to see that cut.

The next speaker wanted to say a big thank you to the library service. She used the service every day and, without it, would have stayed in the house doing nothing.

Madeline Barratt responded by speaking about the Digital Strategy and the "silver surfer" classes. These were currently being provided and would be increased in future. The classes were advertised in a range of ways.

In response to questions about how the consultation and meeting had been advertised, it was explained that there had been a press release, posters in the libraries, and material online. Councillor Penneck said that there had been lots of publicity in the Sutton Guardian when the decision to go to consultation was made and that there were still 4 weeks of the consultation to go.

The panel were asked if the Council had considered ways of reducing running costs and whether it would be possible to have a membership fee (the speaker said that he would not mind paying one) or charging more for CDs and fines.

The first attendee who spoke then congratulated the other speakers and said that he had heard wonderful things. He reiterated that the library at Roundshaw is the hub of the community and should not be taken away. The community aspect is the thing that he most treasured and if that was damaged there would be no going back. He also said that he regularly used the IT in the library with help from the librarians and that if volunteers were not suitably knowledgeable it would not work.

Councillor Penneck confirmed that the libraries currently provide both IT equipment and support and that that would continue. Madeline Barratt explained that charging for basic library services (such as through a membership fee) was not allowed under the Public Libraries Act and that charges could only be made for extras. In terms of the amount charged for CDs and DVDs there was a tipping point where if prices were raised any higher, the demand would go down, particularly as there were alternative providers of those products. Jan Underhill said that they

were looking internally at ways of making efficiency savings to ensure that no opportunity was overlooked. She said that 2,000 people had taken part in the consultation so far.

The final question concerned whether the libraries could generate income by renting space for conferences, etc. Councillor Penneck confirmed that as space was being rationalised, the library service would be looking to generate more letting income particularly in the larger libraries. Jan Underhill said that they would be increasingly looking at opportunities to make links with different groups e.g. charities and the voluntary sector.

Councillor Penneck closed the meeting by thanking the audience for attending and giving their views.

Comments/Questions on Post-it notes

Increased Volunteer and Community Group Involvement	
Theme	**Comments**
Need to retain professional / paid staff	Volunteers are not the solution or alternative to paid staff. Look at staff efficiencies instead
	Yes but keep core staff and combine joint purchasing.
	Against volunteers they have less knowledge but are taking jobs from skilled librarians.
	Professionally qualified staff are essential. Their skills should be valued and cannot necessarily be provided by volunteers.
	I would be happy for volunteer help in library services as long as it did not mean redundancies.
	Need experienced staff on premises.
	Seems an insult to trained staff to replace them with volunteers. I note the housebound volunteers do not need to be readers, only able to carry heavy bags!
	I am happy to volunteer in some way but would hesitate to do this if it meant paid staff losing their jobs.
	Library needs the service of skills professional management.
	Nothing has been said regarding the role of a trained librarian and the work they can do to help an individual research enquiry?
Managing / training volunteers	Are volunteers IT competent?
	I would question the commitment of a volunteer and community group running the library. Will the level of quality and standards of the current library service be able to be maintained?

	Training – how can a patchwork of volunteers be trained to a level high enough to provide a comprehensive and efficient service – impossible!
	Volunteers are hard to come by, how will you manage when they decide not to go into work and holidays?
	Librarians have specialist knowledge. How soon will volunteers acquire this, if ever?
Recruitment of volunteers	Would need a strong campaign to get right type of committed volunteers. Libraries are important to the community, they are the life blood of the people who need to be informed, educated and learned.
	A shared service with community volunteers (if enough came forward)!
	I would be prepared to offer my services as a volunteer as a last resort to save our essential library service but this should not be the answer in one of the richest nations in the world.
Type of community involvement	Any community scheme that requires self-funding is a non-starter.
	Which community groups? Define!
	Yes, but focus on involvement of younger and young parents as they will benefit most.
	Share social facilities with neighbouring libraries, ie Cheam/Worcester Park – encourage local people to join 'Friends of the Library' to start social activities which would generate funds etc.
	Increase interaction between Friends Groups – this is a good use of community support.
	Increase volunteers and group sharing with another Council. Outsourcing to a Trust but not a private company.
General Comments	If libraries become community led would they then be told, down the line, you need to vacate existing library space for property development and find your own site.
	What sanctions would Sutton Library Service have over the community led or managed provider?

	How can a community group provide a universal service if it does not have access to the Sutton library computer or extensive databases.
	How would this be funded?
	If this reduces senior management posts, the expensive ones!

Commissioning or Outsourcing Library Service to a Trust or Private Company

Theme	Comments
Maintaining quality of service	Why would outsourcing necessarily be done more cheaply? Implications? Reduced Service? Less choice etc? Against this option strongly!
	How would each of the models proposed today be protected to ensure the range of books/info etc is maintained as comprehensive and not overtaken by any one interest group thereby excluding others?
	Any external company must be experienced in library services.
	Who are these outsource companies? How much would they cost? Would library charges be affected?
Costs / Value for money	Outsourcing will ultimately cost more – shareholders take their cut!
	Any other organisation would cream off some of the money you are trying to save.
	How could it save money to give the service to a private profit making company? Sounds crazy!
	Outsourcing and PFI will be the wrong choice. It will cost the library service in the long run. Just look at the problem with privatised hospitals who cannot service their private contracts.
	No! Have a look at the mess of other private public services cost – cutting services.
	Must be non-profit and cheaper than existing arrangements for the foreseeable future.
Comments in favour of considering outsourcing	Yes, let's get companies involved. They will invest to achieve profit and challenge existing ways of doing things.

	I am sure that most of us will be prepared to subscribe to the service but the danger of profit making enterprises is that the subscription increases too much! However, it is still worth investigating.
General comments against	No keep it within a Council and free for most services. Libraries should not run for profit – public library service and private company is a contradiction in terms.

Sharing Library Services with Another Council

Theme	Comments
Comments in favour of sharing services	I approve joining up with Kingston or Croydon but do not approve of privatisation.
	Sharing library services is a good idea.
	I believe that sharing management divisions between Sutton and Merton or Kingston is a good proposition. Both boroughs have relatively similar needs and the savings would be much welcomed.
	This appears to the best option if it generates the required savings via economies of scale.
	Best option of the 3.
	This model is viable. There are opportunities to share back office services and staff.
	Yes, always beneficial!
	Yes, makes absolute sense!
	Seems a good idea. Better than community only.
	We need to know how much each option will save but clearly shared has shown benefits in other areas so go there.
	Joining the buying consortium is definitely beneficial to Sutton with very few drawbacks. Provided the management is effective, the savings made through economies of scale would be much welcomed.
Concerns about quality of service	Which other Council still runs libraries and are they up to the standard we require?
	Centralised buying good idea, but will this mean less books/computers?

Concerns about longer term viability	We need to know what the savings would be but generally a shared service would fulfil 1964 Act, allow continuity and secure the service or would it? Would shared mean libraries are safe?
	If it really saves money, worth considering. You would have to be sure it didn't just shift expenditure.
General comments	Would each Council retain its own mobile library service?
	A viable option perhaps, but surely too late to share with Croydon who have made their decision already - outsourced!
	Book stock rotation would be needed to save money and provide variety.
	Need to know more about this option.
	No need. Books can already be obtained from neighbouring boroughs.

Other Comments

Theme	Comments
Mobile Library	Mobile library – keep it!
	So long as I get a book I don't care who brings them.
	Mobile library – a fantastic service run by outstanding people. Volunteers would not have the experience to help people.
	Use home delivery service – important because of mobility.
	Have the Council the faintest idea of the impact on elderly people if the mobile service is cut? It would be devastating!
	Your figures state that 37% of mobile library users use another library – that means that 64% of them only use the mobile library.
	The volunteer housebound service is not a replacement for the mobile library. Are the elderly who can walk to the mobile library classed as "housebound"?
	How will the elderly carry heavy library books to and from public transport if mobile library is withdrawn?

	Ageing population – mobile library service is essential. Needs to be expanded, not cut!
	If part of the new library strategy is to meet the needs of the ageing population, how can you stop the mobile library which already does that so admirably?
Effects of making savings / changes	What effect will cuts have on children's library?
	Children's Services cut!! How do mothers who work find a good library that have an excellent book supply? Carshalton is getting less and less books.
	Knowledge should be the last thing to be cut in any public service.
	Browsing the shelves is essential. The idea of removing shelving and replacing it with a digital catalogue will discourage readers and therefore do nothing to improve literacy.
	Whatever is done to save money, it is essential to improve the toilet facilities for men at Sutton Central library? It is 11.00am on Saturday 14 November and currently the toilet on our level, 2A is closed (locked).The Civic offices are not open for toilet purposes, access to the library is severely limited by building works to the vent and the lift from the Civic offices being out of action as it often is.
Charging / Income generation	Introduce a nominal annual library membership fee. To save money reduce library opening hours ie by not opening Sundays, running costs would be reduced.
	Increase fines and borrowing costs, ie CDs from £1 to £1.05.
	Ask people if they are willing to pay something for the library service. I know elderly people who would happily contribute to keep the mobile library going – they value it so much.
	A small charge when applying for and renewing ones library ticket makes sense and most people would accept this. Perhaps renew it every 1 or 2 years.
	An annual fee of £25pa per library card but not a) youngsters up to age 18 b) the infirm and renewable annually.
	Provide conference and seminar space.

	Explore potential for organisations to contribute through their CSR commitment.
	Make a small charge for internet use.
	Why are we charging for computers when the benefit system requires computer access for those who cannot afford the cost? Will you provide free concessions? Wifi will help.
Comments on the consultation	Why was this consultation meeting not more widely publicised? Why were the consultation documents only available at my library and not delivered to every house or advertised in the Sutton Guardian?
	I am a member of the library – they have my email address. I was not invited to this consultation. Why?
	Sorry, but deeply disappointed in your overall presentation. Too general, too vague, low level professional presentation – lots of hype and lot of fluff!
	We need to know how much each option would generate.
	The whole purpose of this exercise is to save £1 million - until we know what savings can be accrued from all options, we are wasting our time.
Further cost-saving options for consideration	This meeting covered a limited number of options. Didn't suggest the option of closing more libraries but keeping all remaining with expert paid staff providing consistent high level service. The service is too important to leave it to the lottery of volunteers.
	Why not close the useless Life Centre we wasted money on, was it £3.5 million and use that money to run our libraries. Why have we wasted many thousands on wooden useless log seats, ghastly chrome waste bins constantly vandalised; a boring looking clock no one notices opposite Sutton station?
	Why is the Life Centre not included for consideration of savings as well as Beddington library and the mobile library? It costs much more.
	Why not look at other options, eg, closing one more libraries to preserve the rest.
	Stop spending money on silly projects which are councillor pets.

General comments	The library need a senior management team that has the skills and experience to implement this big change. I am not convinced the current SMT is up to the job.
	Libraries should become the hub to provide access to information. Advice to small businesses and start-ups teach digital literacy; financial literacy; provide debit advice; house citizen's advice bureau; provide lifelong learning; on-line courses; family history – who do you think you are sessions; homework clubs – individual tutoring; subscription databases and run information clinics.
	What proportion of Sutton's total budget is £40m? 22% cut in library budget seems extreme.
	24.33% look it up!
	Live on my own, 85 years old – talking library books are important.
	In Sutton you want to discourage car use, but you use car ownership as a justification for closing Beddington library. That smacks of hypocrisy.
	Westcroft opens at 7.00am, non-staffed. How many people use it at that hour? How many books are lost?