

SUTTON'S FUTURE



Library Service Consultation

<https://www.sutton.gov.uk/suttonsfuture>

Overview

Sutton Libraries

The Library Service in Sutton is provided through:

- a network of 9 libraries located across the borough;
- one mobile vehicle delivering to a timetable of stops; and
- a Housebound Service, delivering to residents who are unable to travel from their home to a local library due to ill health or disability.

The service provides access to books, audio visual materials, computers, learning opportunities, events and activities to potentially every resident of the borough, with nearly 1.5 million visits to libraries during 2013-14.

The annual libraries, heritage and arts budget is £4.4 million per year.

In January 2015, the Council adopted a Library Strategy for Sutton's Library Service, which sets the strategic and operational direction for the service to 2019. There are four key aims:

- Literacy: growing readers of the future
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Narrowing the digital divide
- Creating a viable, sustainable and quality service within available budgets

What is the Council Proposing to Change?

The Council is consulting with all residents on the future of the Library Service. The council knows there are a number of different models for

delivering the Library Service in the future and so it is consulting on a range of options, including the closure of Beddington Library, the discontinuation of the Mobile Library service and the rationalisation of library opening hours.

Why Are The Council Proposing to Change the Library Service?

Sutton Council has made very significant savings across the board over recent years through a number of initiatives, including reducing the number of staff employed, and re-organising support and administrative functions.

The reductions in the funding that the Council receives from central government mean that Sutton Council will have to save a further £31 million by 2019.

The Council believes that this cannot be done without looking at other ways to deliver its services, including libraries. The Library, Heritage and Arts Service has therefore undertaken to review all areas of activity, including procurement, staffing and the library network, with an aim to save around £1 million by 2018-19.

How You Can Get Involved

The Council wants to hear from residents about the proposed options for the future of Library Service.

The consultation period runs from 23rd September to 16th December 2015 and there are many ways you can give us your views:

- Complete our online survey at: <https://sutton.citizenspace.com/chief-executives-group/suttons-library-service>
- Fill in a paper copy of the survey, available at all of our libraries
- Come along to our open meeting. This will be held on Saturday 14th November at the Europa Gallery in Sutton Central Library and will run from 10.00 am to 12.00.

Background

Under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museum Act, the council must provide a 'comprehensive and efficient service' for all individuals who live, work or study within the borough and who are 'desirous' of using the service. The phrase "comprehensive and efficient" is not clearly defined by the Act: it does not, for example, say how many libraries should be provided, describe how they should be spread around an area, or set a minimum distance to travel.

In Sutton, the challenge is to continue meeting our obligations under the Act, whilst making substantial savings to meet the Council's funding gap.

In order to support the consultation, community profiles have been produced for each library service point. The profiles identify catchment areas for each library and provide demographic information including age, ethnicity and indices of deprivation for the population in those catchment areas. They also show key performance statistics for each library including number of visits, cost per visit and running costs. These community profiles are on the [Council's website](#). They will also be available in libraries during the consultation period.

Options for Change

Closing Beddington Library

The usage of Beddington Library is in decline: visitor numbers went down by 78% between 2006/07 and 2013/14 and there are only 474 active users (defined as registered users who have borrowed an item within the last year).

The costs per visit in 2013/14 were £10.04 which is significantly higher than the equivalent costs for Sutton Central (£3.65) and Worcester Park (£2.18), for example.

In addition, library usage statistics show that nearly half of Beddington's active library members also use other libraries within Sutton.

While the physical condition of the building is generally good, there are no toilets available for the public and only limited street parking.

Beddington library's catchment area does not score highly on measures such as the indices of deprivation and the needs analysis. In particular, the area is well served by public transport and 84% of people in the area have access to a car/van.

The closure of Beddington Library would save £50,000 per year.

Stopping the Mobile Library service

Only 4 of the 33 London Boroughs still run a Mobile Library service, so Sutton is one of the few remaining ones to do so. Sutton is a compact, urban borough with good transport links and a high level of car/van users.

The Mobile Library service has high transactional cost and declining usage. 37% of Mobile Library users also use another library within Sutton.

The Council recognises that there are customers who have limited ability to travel to other service points and are currently improving the Housebound Library service to ensure capacity to expand the service.

Stopping the Mobile Library service would save £166,000 per year.

Changing Opening Hours

The library service has taken cuts to opening hours in previous years (2011-2013) to achieve budget savings.

To achieve further savings there would have to be significant additional reductions in opening hours across the service. Appendix A is an illustration of the scale of the reduction that might be needed. **Note:** Appendix A is for illustration only and not a proposal to reduce opening hours.

Implementing such reductions in opening hours would, however, have an impact on people who wished to use the branch libraries outside of the new core hours. The Council would also not be making full use of its assets as the premises would be empty for long periods.

Making more use of volunteers and community groups

Sutton Library service has been using volunteers to deliver 'added value', not as a substitute for duties currently done by paid staff.

The scale of financial reductions across local authorities has, however, prompted many councils to look at whether volunteers or community groups should actually deliver services. More than one in three authorities has at least one community operated library within their area, representing 5% of English library provision (2013 figures).

There are several different models for how volunteers or the community can run or support libraries. These range from having an independent community library which has no involvement from the Council (such as the ones in Lewisham, North Yorkshire and Bradford), through to libraries which are still Council-led but have significant support from volunteers. The main models are:

- Independent community library, either asset or non-asset owning, with no public sector involvement;
- Co-produced library (partnerships between councils and community groups);
- Community-managed with some form of ongoing council support;
- Community-supported but council-led, with paid staff and significant support from volunteers;
- 'Commissioned community', fully funded by a council but delivered by a not-for-profit or social enterprise company, or mutual.

The amount of savings generated by these options would depend on the option chosen.

Commissioning or outsourcing Library Services

Some Councils have commissioned outside companies to provide their library service. For example, Carillion run Hounslow, Ealing, Harrow and Croydon; and GLL run Wandsworth and Greenwich. Other Councils are also exploring this option.

A similar option would be to pass the libraries over to a Trust, which is a not-for-profit organisation. While this option could deliver some savings, the disadvantages are that the Council could no longer be able to make key decisions about important community assets.

Sharing Library Services with another Council

The London Borough of Sutton already has shared service arrangements for legal services, IT and Human Resources. In London, Bromley and Bexley share library services, with one management team and head of service.

This option could be explored further depending on what other options are adopted. But, given the reductions in management roles in the Sutton Library Service in recent years, the potential for significant savings would be limited, particularly as there would be costs associated with harmonising services across two or more boroughs.

Appendix A: Library opening hours

Current opening hours

Library	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Current hours open per week
Beddington	0	4	0	3.5	4	6.5	0	18
Cheam	0	9.5	7.5	7.5	8.5	7.5	0	40.5
Library@Life Centre	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	7.5	4	59
Library@Phoenix	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	7.5	4	59
Library@Westcroft	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	7.5	4	59
Circle Library	0	8.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	0	38.5
Worcester Park	0	9.5	7.5	7.5	8.5	7.5	0	40.5
Wallington	0	9.5	7.5	7.5	8.5	7.5	0	40.5
Sutton	8.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	7.5	3.5	61.5
Total								416.5

Illustrated opening hours

Library	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Illustrated hours open per week
Beddington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheam	0	6.5	7.5	4	0	6	0	24
Library@Life Centre	0	9.5	9.5	5.5	0	6	0	30.5
Library@Phoenix	0	9.5	9.5	5.5	0	6	0	30.5
Library@Westcroft	0	9.5	9.5	5.5	0	6	0	30.5
Circle Library	0	6.5	7.5	4	0	6	0	24
Worcester Park	0	6.5	7.5	4	0	6	0	24
Wallington	0	6.5	7.5	4	0	6	0	24
Sutton	8.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6	3.5	60
Total								247.5