

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> November 21 2006	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Executive Member for Culture Leisure and Sports
<b>Report title:</b>		Relocation of Reference Library	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		East Walworth/Faraday/Newington	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the ground floor of Newington Library is refurbished, with extra space opened up for public use and additional study spaces provided, that the reference service is relocated to this space and that the service is accessible to all.
2. That newspaper provision is expanded at Brandon, East Street and John Harvard libraries to improve provision there and to reduce pressure on space at Newington
3. That additional study space is identified at John Harvard Library to accommodate large numbers of people from SE1, requiring study space.
4. That proposals for improving and modernising the information service are noted.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. Providing access to information is a key component of a modern public library service. Framework for the Future, the Government's ten-year vision for public libraries states that:

*"Libraries have a central role to play in ensuring everyone has access to the resources, information and knowledge they need – particularly those groups in society who will otherwise be disadvantaged, including people who are less affluent and people with literacy problems"*

6. There is currently a discrete Reference Library located on the first floor of Newington Library. The Reference Library provides hard copy information on a range of subjects as well as newspapers and magazines, access to seven public PCs and to study space.
7. It is not DDA compliant and is cramped and inflexible. The Cuming Museum, also based on the first floor has been the subject of a recent DDA challenge. Access to the Reference library is by an additional flight of stairs up from the Museum. It is understood that some of the fittings are listed, making it both difficult and expensive to address access issues appropriately.

8. It is also the case that all of Southwark's Libraries already provide quick reference collections as well as access to global online services, reflecting changes in how information is accessed today. This includes encyclopaedias, dictionaries, atlases, yearbooks and other important information tools. This means that most enquiries can be dealt with locally without solely having to refer customers on to Newington.
9. Likewise, all Southwark Libraries already have free internet access, carry a range of newspapers and magazines and offer study space.
10. Increasingly, information is now available electronically and Southwark has invested in a number of subscriptions to provide service wide on-line access to major reference materials. This means that customers no longer have to travel to Newington to use single hard copy publications of these titles as they can access them in their local library. Customers with home internet access and who are library members can also access these titles from home or work.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Relocating the information service at Newington Library**

11. In order to comply with DDA legislation, it is proposed that the information service offered from the first floor Reference Library is relocated to the ground floor at Newington. This will include opening up currently non-public space on the ground floor and reconfiguring space to accommodate the seven public access PCs, study space and useful and up to date hard copy stock, as well as newspapers, magazines and other items.
12. Items which are less in demand but are of local or historical significance will be retained off open access but will continue to be available through staff at Newington. This does not differ from current practice, as significant amounts of older but still useful stock is held off public access.
13. The new space identified for the Information Service will be a designated quiet study space and will be signed as such. In addition to this, there will be a staffed enquiry desk to deal with enquiries, to find information and to provide other help to customers.

### **Improving the information service across all libraries**

14. In addition to this, to emphasise the universality of the reference and information offer, it is proposed that the information service generally be improved, promoting all of Southwark's libraries as the place to go to get information on a whole range of subjects both in hard copy and through electronic means.

15. The Library Service is currently being re-structured in staff terms, to better deliver corporate and national priorities, including raising the profile on information services with the creation of two specific posts to lead and develop this area of service.
16. As well as maintaining high quality hard copy information collections, use of and access to on-line resources will continue to be developed, enabling more people to access information from home or work, and at all of Southwark's libraries.
17. Staff will receive training to improve their information retrieval skills to enable them to better support customers, particularly those lacking confidence in using either printed or electronic media.
18. A marketing plan is being produced and implemented to ensure local people take full advantage of this enhanced service.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

19. Proposals to relocate the service to the ground floor have been costed at approximately £100,000, including building works and purchase of furniture and fittings. There is sufficient provision within Culture, Libraries and Learning division to fund the estimated cost of these works.
20. Installation of a lift from the ground floor to the first floor, with associated building works and modifications to the reference library have been costed at £400,000.
21. Given that there are proposals to replace the library with a new, fully accessible, purpose built library as part of the Elephant and Castle redevelopment, installing a lift at the cost of £400,000 does not represent good value and an additional budget provision is required to fund these works.

## **IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES**

### **Community Impact Assessment**

22. Relocating the reference and information service to the ground floor at Newington Library will greatly enhance disabled access and enable Southwark to meet its DDA responsibilities regarding access to service.
23. Southwark Disablement Association has expressed support for the proposals.
24. The proposals for reconfiguring the ground floor space will enable a small increase in study places to be provided, with a total of 50 places, two more than the current total in the reference and adult libraries.

25. Implementation of the proposals set out in this report will result in service improvements for the whole community. The proposed improvements to the information service across the whole of Southwark will increase the availability of resources, reaching those unable or having difficulty in travelling to Newington.
26. The more proactive, customer oriented approach to service described in the report will ensure that less confident customers maximise the benefits of using the service and are better aware of the range of services available to them.
27. A recently published research study of 14-35 year olds and the future development of public libraries asked participants about their views of the library as an information resource. The study found that participants had "...requirements from staff that go beyond traditional librarian services to a more active/ interactive role..." The report also explores the needs of students of various ages for support at key times – around exam periods in particular and states that "...in addition to providing relevant space, real value could be provided through provision of timely support services – which has the potential to tackle social exclusion and build community identity". These statements ring true for Southwark and this proactive approach to service would build on our existing network of study support sessions and draw in new audiences.

### **BOROUGH SOLICITORS COMMENTS**

28. This report sets out the steps proposed to bring this service provision into better compliance with the Council's duties under the Disability Discrimination Act, and takes into account best value on the delivery of these proposals. Implementation of the proposals will need to be in compliance with Contract Standing Orders and to take into account Procurement Guidelines.

### **CONSULTATION**

29. Consultation has been undertaken with:
  - Local residents
  - Current users of Newington Reference Library
  - Staff and Trade Unions
  - MP and local Councillors
  - Museums, Libraries and Archives Council London (MLA)
  - London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA)
  - Individual residents as requested
30. Local residents have been able to put questions and make comments at the October and November Walworth Community Council meetings.
31. Six tours of the proposed location for the relocated service have been held, with a total of 27 attendances. Of these, three were repeat attendances, making a total of 24 individuals participating in the tours.

32. The Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Culture, leisure and Sports attended a public meeting on November 6<sup>th</sup> at which residents were able to express their views and ask questions.
33. A small number of residents requested and received individual meetings with officers or the Executive Member.
34. Current users of the Reference Library were consulted by means of survey throughout August. The survey sought to establish what use customers make of the Reference Library, the rate of success in finding information, frequency of use, where customers come from and if particular age groups make more use of it than others. 170 survey forms were completed.
35. The main reported activities of customers surveyed were reading newspapers and magazines (48.2%), using computers for online reference, software and the internet (46.4%), using study space (31.1%) and using information books such as encyclopaedias and dictionaries (21.1%).
36. 62.1% of those surveyed said they had found information on the day of their visit, but 26% said they had not been looking for information. 6.5% had been unable to find the information they needed. Customers were also asked how they had found information and 59.2% said they had found it by themselves with only 24.3% asking for staff help.
37. In terms of frequency of use, 65.7% of those surveyed said they used the library either daily or weekly. This reflects the nature of use referred to in section 24, with most people coming to read newspapers, use the computers and to study.
38. 59.2% of those surveyed knew that the library had a website and 14.8% had already used it to access information from home or the office. This does not include people who had used online information in the library, but given that 46.4% of people came to use computers, it is likely that in-library use is significant.
39. The vast majority of users were aged between 20 and 55 (74.1%) and therefore of working age. This age group includes people in further and higher education – most of who have access to college or University libraries. Southwark College, Morley College, South Bank University and the University of the Arts all have a significant presence in the locality. All provide library services, including study space, access to ICT and a comprehensive range of materials to support courses undertaken in those institutions within easy reach of Newington.

40. Very few young people use the reference Library, with only 5.8% of those surveyed being aged under 19. This may be because provision for younger people is already made on the ground floor in both the children's library and the lending library, both of which have free access to the internet and to online resources as well as hard copy materials to support young people. There is also a regular homework club in the children's library.
41. The majority of customers for the Reference Library are drawn from the local vicinity with 33.5% coming from SE17, and 22.9% from SE1. There are very few users from SE15 or SE22, which may indicate that people from these areas use Peckham and Dulwich for information services rather than travelling to Newington. People travelling from SE1 also have access to John Harvard Library on Borough High Street which has study space and access to ICT.
42. Consultation on the staffing elements of the staffing implications of these proposals has been undertaken as part of a re-structuring exercise carried out under the Council's established procedures. The Trade Unions have been consulted as part of this process.

### **Conclusions from the consultation process**

43. The proposals to relocate the Reference Library to the ground floor at Newington Library have been welcomed by Southwark Disablement Association and by disabled customers.
44. Concerns have been raised about the following issues:
- Access to book stock
  - Access to quiet study space
  - Access to computers
  - Opening hours
  - Staff help
  - Access to Ordnance Survey maps
45. The proposals for relocation include a small increase in the overall number of study spaces to be provided in the library as well as maintaining access to the same number of computers in the building. This area will be signed off as a quiet study space and the use of mobile telephones will not be allowed in this part of the building. The ground floor, currently closed on Wednesdays would commence Wednesday opening following relocation of stock and services to the ground floor. This will enable a small extension in opening hours, as it is planned to stay open until 8pm rather than the current 5pm Wednesday closing time.
46. Useful and up to date book stock will be moved to the ground floor. A thorough examination of all stock currently on public access will be undertaken before items are moved downstairs, but it is envisaged that about 25% of current stock will remain on public access, with the remainder available through staff either from the ground floor gallery or from storage areas within the building.

47. Staff will still be on hand to support customers to find information using book stock and ICT. There will be a staffed enquiry desk on the ground floor to accommodate this. The overall number of staff working at Newington Library will remain at 17.5 full time equivalents, the same as now.
48. Access to Ordnance Survey maps will still be possible, with consideration given to larger desk space for this purpose.
49. The findings of the survey indicate the Reference Library is used most for accessing ICT, for reading newspapers and as a place to sit and study. In addition to this, there is still demand for current hard copy reference materials.
50. The proposals to relocate the service to the ground floor of the library and to develop an improved information service would enable current service levels to be maintained. Implementation of the proposals would also include making additional use of electronic resources; enable more self-service and free staff to spend more time with less confident customers, helping them to use both books and computers.
51. The survey shows that few young people use the current reference service, preferring to access information in either the children's or the lending library at ground floor level, as well as being able to get extra help at regular homework sessions. We propose to further develop this service with all school classes visiting Southwark's libraries receiving a hands-on introduction to the new service.
52. In addition to implementing the proposals for Newington Library, evidence from the survey demonstrates a need for additional newspaper provision at Brandon, East Street and John Harvard libraries, as well as for expanding study space at John Harvard Library, enabling more people to access these services closer to home.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background papers	Held at	Contact
Framework for the Future, Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade (DCMS 2003)	Environment and Leisure Department, 15 Spa Road, Bermondsey, SE16 3QW	Adrian Whittle 020 7525 1577
A research study of 14-35 year olds for the future development of public libraries. Final report. (MLA, DCMS, Laser Foundation, June 2006)	Environment and Leisure Department, 15 Spa Road, Bermondsey, SE16 3QW	Adrian Whittle 020 7525 1577

## AUDIT TRAIL

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