Consultation on the future of the Southend-on-Sea Library Service 2013-2028

Facing the Challenge together

Public Consultation booklet
Welcome to the second phase of consultation as part of the Southend-on-Sea Library Service Review. This period of consultation runs from **10th June to 8th September 2013** and seeks to gather your views and opinions on the proposals suggested in the draft Library Strategy.

In July 2012 it was agreed that a review of the Library Service would take place. The purpose of the review is to consider the future direction of the Library Service and produce a Library Development Strategy, clearly identifying proposals for the future service.

The Library Service has not had a full review for over 15 years, however in that time there have been changes to the way the service has been delivered and used. The opportunity for the community to access information and Libraries has significantly changed in these years.

New technology will continue to have an impact on the way in which we will access Library Services.

**Year ending visits by branch**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>March 2009</th>
<th>March 2010</th>
<th>March 2011</th>
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<tr>
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<td>&lt;200,000</td>
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<td>WES</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
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In line with the national trend in the decline in the number of people using libraries, the Southend Library Service has witnessed an overall decline in visits to its libraries in excess of 6 per cent from April 2008 (954,004) to March 2011 (896,978).

The review spent 3 months between October 2012 and January 2013 asking people how they used the libraries and how they would want them to develop so that libraries remain strong and relevant over the next 15 years.

We also looked at how Southend's libraries performed compared with those of other councils and how much they cost compared to other councils. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who responded to the initial consultation which ended in January 2013 – many of the ideas put forward are already being delivered within the service (e.g. tea & coffee facilities, links with schools and health) and many of the aspects of the service you like (e.g. author talks, gallery exhibitions, internet access) will continue.

The full report of this first stage is available on the Council’s website: www.southend.gov.uk/libraryreview

Our vision

Our vision for the library service for the next 15 years is:

Southend Libraries will keep serving the whole community through recreation, entertainment, education and information; responding to the borough’s needs and adapting to new technologies.

This vision will be achieved by:

- Delivering accessible library services for all
- Welcoming everyone
- Promoting lifelong learning and enjoyment of culture
- Giving spaces for people to meet, read, study, explore and browse
- Helping community libraries to operate successfully
- Sharing policies and values across all the borough’s library branches
- Leading the field for library services in the Eastern Region

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From conversations we have had with you and from your feedback, the Council knows that libraries are an important and valued service for the borough.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council will have to reduce its budget by a further £32.5 million in the next three years and some of these savings will come from the library service. The Library Service operates within a current budget of £3.12m; this is set to be reduced by a total of £378,000 by March 2016.

As a result of this early work we have developed a strategy for the library service. This is contained in a series of proposals that, if implemented fully, should lead to the safeguarding of Southend's Library Branch network with the support of the community and improve and modernise the service over the next 15 years.

The proposals we are asking you to consider are challenging but they do address the immediate, short term financial pressures faced by the service, whilst at the same time laying the foundations for the future; creating a Library Service that continues to work well for Southend-on-Sea.

The proposals we are asking your views on are:

- **The main Library provision will be at the Forum, Southend** – from October 2013 the new central library provision at the Forum will be open 7 days a week, have longer opening hours, Wi-Fi and 25% more stock than presently exists in the current central library. The Forum will feature bigger gallery space, a children's library, coffee shop facilities, meeting rooms along with an outdoor entertainment space.

- **Two hub libraries; one in the East of Southend and one in the West**; each hub will benefit from longer opening hours than at present, improved IT provision and book stock.
  - The East Hub library will be an amalgamation of Thorpedene and Friars libraries on a new site in Delaware Road.
  - The West hub will be a development of either Leigh Library or Kent Elms Library. This hub will initially operate from an existing library site but could be considered for relocation if a suitable site became available in the longer term.

- **The remaining branch libraries Westcliff, Southchurch and one in the west, will be offered to Community Groups to run as Community Managed Libraries**, staffed by volunteers and supported by the Council in terms of the provision of materials, access to relevant parts of the Library Computer system and professional support and advice.
  - These branches will operate under a Service Level Agreement within a framework of policies set by the Council.

- **The development of a Virtual Library** providing 24 hour access to on-line information and resources and to support both the Community Libraries and enable Library Users to access the service at times convenient to them.

- **Improvements to existing services** to include the new National Offers around:
  - **Health** – services to promote general health and wellbeing along with the health benefits gained from reading and a completely new service, which has recently been introduced into Southend's libraries ‘Books on Prescription’. GPs will be able to prescribe patients cognitive behavioural therapy books from a quality assured national reading list which will be available in local libraries.
  - **Reading** – services which develop, deliver and promote reading services. Our libraries already run national reading programmes, such as the ‘Six Book Challenge’ and the ‘Big Summer Read’ which can inspire adults and children to pick up a book and read; helping the 5.1 million people in England with inadequate literacy skills.
  - **Information** – supporting people to access information and services online in areas such as careers and job seeking, health, personal financial information and benefits. Our libraries will continue to provide internet access and support to complete Universal Credit applications and manage their account online.
• **Digital** – free internet access for every customer (for minimum period of time), clear and accessible online information about library services, trained staff to help customers access online information. Giving our customers the ability to join, renew and reserve books online. This area will develop to include the opportunity for e-lending of digital books, audio and video with remote access, Wi-Fi, social networking, a library APP and loans of digital devices.

**Maximise the benefit** to users of the mobile service and Home Library Service. This includes:

- Transferring a number of residential homes to the Home Library Service
- Using the mobile and or temporary ‘pop-up’ libraries to serve neighbourhood areas, targeting service users at different venues such as major store car parks or outreach locations such as Cluny Square
- Extending the Home Library Service to all those whom the Council currently helps to live at home.

**In the next 5 to 10 years the Council will look at:**

- Replacing the current Southchurch Library building; which is almost at the end of its life
- Introducing Wi-Fi into all of the branches (including any community managed sites)
- Improving IT provision
- Access to a wider range of E-book lending as it becomes more readily available in public libraries
- Possible relocation of Leigh Library from its existing site to the Elm Road Development (should this happen an alternative use for the existing building will be sought)

**How can you respond?**

You can share your views with us in any of the following ways:

- Visit your local library and use the ‘drop-boxes’ to return your completed hardcopy questionnaire.
- Complete the questionnaire online at [www.southend.gov.uk/libraryreview](http://www.southend.gov.uk/libraryreview)
- Host your own local discussion and send us your conclusions.
- Email your comments direct to libraryreview@southend.gov.uk
- Write to: Library Review Team, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, 6th Floor Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea Essex SS2 6ER
Q1. We want to improve the service in difficult financial times. Do you think our vision for developing the service in the way proposed is right?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don’t know

**Creation of Library hubs**

The proposal is for the creation of two hub libraries which will be managed and staffed by the Council, one in the east and one in the west of the Borough. The other three branches will become Community Managed Libraries.

Q2. Do you agree with the creation of the two staffed hub libraries and the three Community Managed Libraries?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don’t know

Q3. We are proposing that the East Hub Library is on a site in Delaware Road. We are also proposing that the West Hub Library is located at either Leigh Library or Kent Elms Library. Which of these libraries do you think should become the hub library managed by the Council? Please provide us with as many reasons for your preference as possible.

☐ Leigh  ☐ Kent Elms  ☐ Don’t know  ☐ Not relevant to me

Reasons:

Q4. Would you be prepared to volunteer within one of the Council managed hub library locations?

Leigh  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
Kent Elms  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
Delaware Road site  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
Community Managed Libraries

We know that the library service in Southend is highly valued amongst those of you who use it. However, in order to modernise and safeguard the service for the future the proposed changes in the service are necessary given the current financial position.

A major change would be that three of the branch libraries would become Community Managed Libraries by 2016. At a Community Managed Library the Council’s input would be through the provision of books, access to relevant parts of the Library Computer system, professional support, advice and training. These branches are likely to remain part of the Council’s statutory service and will operate under a Service Level Agreement within a framework of policies set by the Council; detailing the level of support from the Council and the type of service the Community Managed Library will provide as a minimum.

Day to day staffing would be by volunteers organised and managed by a community organisation. This model has the advantage of supporting Community Libraries within the framework of the Council’s Library Service, ensuring users are treated the same at all libraries and have access to the same services, whilst allowing community led developments at libraries. This model is currently in use in several local authorities.

Q5. Do you agree that the creation of community managed libraries is a practical way of maintaining the library branch network within Southend-on-Sea?
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don’t know

Q6. Would you be prepared to volunteer some of your time within a Community Managed Library?
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Maybe

Q7. If you answered ‘Yes’ or ‘Maybe’ to Q6, please indicate which branch location you would be prepared to volunteer at:
☐ Westcliff  ☐ Leigh or Kent Elms  ☐ Southchurch

Please provide your contact details (optional):

Q8. Are any of the social groups you are associated with prepared to consider taking responsibilities for any of the library branches? (The Council will be able to offer support and assistance to community groups to help them take on this responsibility)
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Maybe

Where relevant, please tell us about your group; what it does and the group’s contact details:
Service Enhancements

We are proposing to develop a virtual library which will provide 24 hour online access to all our users, introducing Wi-Fi to all branches (including any community managed sites), improving IT, access to other electronic resources such as e-books and temporary ‘pop-up’ libraries around the borough.

Q9. Which of these service improvements would you welcome?

- [ ] Virtual Library
- [ ] Wi-Fi
- [ ] Better IT
- [ ] E-books & other electronic resources
- [ ] Temporary Pop-up libraries

Comments

Q10. Any further comments, ideas or suggestions on these proposals.
About you...

This section is optional but getting this information will enable us to get a picture of who has been involved in this consultation and help us make sure that all of our users are fully represented.

Please answer the questions below by ticking the boxes that you feel most describes you. If you do not want to answer a specific question, please leave it blank.

Some questions may feel personal; the information we collect will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act. If you would like to know how we use this information, please contact us.

Q11. What is your home postcode?

Q14. What is your age?
- [ ] 0-15 years
- [ ] 16-24 years
- [ ] 25-44 years
- [ ] 45-64 years
- [ ] 65 & over

Q12. Disability
- Do you consider yourself to be disabled?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Q12. Ethnicity
- What is your ethnic origin?
- [ ] White
- [ ] Asian/Asian British
- [ ] Black/Black British
- [ ] Mixed
- [ ] Other Ethnic Groups – please state:
- [ ] Prefer not to say
Q13. Religion/belief – What is your religion?
- Buddhist
- Christian (all denominations)
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- No religion
- Prefer not to say
- Any other religion – please state:

Q15. Sex
- Female
- Male

Q16. Sexual orientation – What is your sexual orientation?
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Gay man
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say
- Other – please state:
Q17. Please tell us if there are any additional factors which may affect you personally as a result of these proposals that you feel we should be aware of.

Thank you for giving us your views

Please return your completed questionnaire in one of the ‘drop-boxes’ at your local library.
As well as taking account of the findings from this consultation we will also be talking to library users, staff, community groups, councillors and the general public about our proposals.

These discussions will help us to decide if our vision and proposals for the future service are right, or they may prompt us to change them completely.

In the autumn the council’s cabinet will decide if they agree with these proposals, having listened to what you tell us.

If the proposals are agreed the work to start implementing the changes will begin in January 2014.