

**Report title: Libraries, Archives and Information Services (LAIS) – Update for Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee**

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**What is the purpose of the update to the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee?**

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<b>Update on the Strategic Review of Libraries</b>	To provide an update on the Libraries and Archives Service re-design and the public consultation on our proposal to extend the current half day opening so Libraries are open for 5 full days, increasing opening hours from 31 to 34 hours per week for all council run community libraries. Note the opening hours of our Central Library are not proposed for change.
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**What is the issue and how does it relate to the Delivery Plan and this committee's workplan?**

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<b>A 2 phased approach to balancing Committee budget and a longer term strategy for SCC libraries</b>	As part of the budget setting process for 2022/23 members requested LAIS be one of the service areas considered for a Strategic Review. In addition, the 2023/24 committee budget was balanced on the assumption that the first phase of this strategic review (including the changes to opening hours) would be delivered in early 2023.
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<b>What are the proposed changes to library opening times?</b>	<p>The proposal is to align the opening times of SCC's 11 Community Hub Libraries.. The libraries are: Chapelton, Crystal Peaks, Darnall, Ecclesall, Firth Park, Highfield, Hillsborough, Manor, Parson Cross, Stocksbridge, Woodseats. (Central Library is unaffected as are Volunteer-run Libraries across the city).</p> <p>We are doing this to make sure we can use our staffing more flexibly to keep our libraries open during their published opening times and better reflect demand patterns of our customers – for example we know more people use the libraries in the mornings and very few later in the afternoon. We are proposing that all 11 Council Community Libraries are open on the same days and times as follows:</p>
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- Monday 10am-5pm
- Tuesday 10am-5pm
- Wednesday 10am-5pm
- Thursday - closed
- Friday 10am-5pm
- Saturday 10am-4pm
- Sunday - closed

The changes on Mondays will impact all Community Hub Libraries and closing on a Thursday will affect 5 Libraries.

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## How the proposed opening days and times were determined

### We analysed book lending data to find out when our customers use libraries the most .

The community hub libraries are currently open for 31 hours in total, with a half day opening, one closed day and one late opening to 6.30pm which occur on different days. All libraries are open on Saturday 10am to 4pm. The closed day is generally on a Wednesday or a Thursday. To determine which days were the most popular (in terms of book issues), we took the issue figures between January and August 2022, and calculated the issues per hour open to determine the most popular days for book borrowing. This suggested the day we should close should be a Thursday, and as half of the community hub libraries are already closed on this day, the change would be less disruptive.

A similar exercise was developed to identify what time of day is most popular for book borrowing using a frequency and weighting calculation, which clearly showed a significant reduction in book borrowing after 5pm, and again after 6pm. Mornings are most popular across all libraries.

### What has the consultation told us?

Consultation began on 10th January and concluded on 26th February 2023 and there were 1271 responses to our survey which could be completed online via Citizen Space, and paper copies of the survey were available in each library. The survey was promoted in each library and library staff attended meetings of the Local Area Committees to engage with members of the public and promote the consultation. Library staff also attended the Diversity event at the Town Hall on 6th February.

For the majority of respondents the change in the opening hours **will not** impact them, with 45% indicating “no change”. 22% of respondents said they would use the library service more, and 17% said they would use it less. Therefore, a potential net gain in usage of 5% by adopting the proposal.

Option	Total	Percent
I will use library services more	279	21.95%
I will use library services less	212	16.68%
No change	578	45.48%
I'm not sure	182	14.32%
Not Answered	20	1.57%

In the free text ‘Any Other Comments’ section, a common response was the suggestion that we need to retain a late night with 174 comments (which is 14% of all responses). However, the majority of these comments expressed they didn’t need to use the late night themselves, they just felt it is important for people who work. However, there were 20 comments from respondents who said it would have a direct detrimental impact on their use of the library service.

## What about the people who said they will stop using libraries?

**We need to consider how we can provide a quality service for the 17% of respondents who said they would use the library less because of our proposed changes**

It is important to look at the 17% who said they would use the service less and whether this impact can be mitigated. The following section looks at alternative ways our customers can access library services.

*E-books and e-magazines:* In recent years the service has grown and developed its e-book and magazine offer (particularly over the pandemic period) which enables customers to access free library books on their own devices at any time of the day. This service is particularly suitable for people who find it difficult to visit the library in person. There were 251 respondents who said they use e-books and magazines. Looking at the 20 respondents who highlighted their inability to use the service if the proposals go ahead, only 3 indicated they use the e-library services. Therefore, there is scope for promoting and encouraging library users who work to access this service.

*Saturday Opening:* There is no change to the Saturday opening hours which is 10am until 4pm. People who work during normal office hours during the week would still be able to access the library on a Saturday.

*Order and Collect:* During the Pandemic the library service developed an 'order and collect' service where library staff choose books to a profile chosen by the customer. Therefore, if customers don't have time to browse the shelves of libraries, this can still be an alternative solution.

*Drop boxes:* Drop boxes were suggested by a small number of respondents, and this could be implemented. This would mean customers can drop off their books at any time of the day.

*Key holding:* The survey included comments from customers who attend groups and activities on a Thursday who were concerned about the activity not continuing. In line with our room hire policy, groups and organisations can hire our community rooms and spaces outside of library opening times, and this would include a Thursday or any evening. The only difference would be the requirement for the group to open and close the library themselves. Alternatively, the group or activity can move to another day.

*Home Library Service:* The Home Library Service is available to anyone who is unable to attend a library in person. This means that people whose work hours prohibit them attending a library could get library books delivered to their home, and if they are not working from home the books can be left with neighbours or put into a safe storage space.

*Central Library:* Central library is not affected by the proposal and would continue to open every day except Sunday, with a late evening until 8pm on a Wednesday.

*Volunteer run libraries:* Volunteer run libraries are unaffected by this proposal, and some will be open on a Thursday and possibly on an evening. Library books reserved on our library catalogue can be picked up at any library including a volunteer run library. Books can also be returned to any Sheffield City Council run library or volunteer run library in Sheffield.

*Events and activities:* It is very rare for events and activities to take place between 5.00pm and 6.30pm, and therefore customers who can only attend at this time are highly unlikely to be attending for this purpose and therefore no mitigation is required. However, we welcome groups and organisations hiring

our libraries outside of opening hours and offering community activities in the evening.

### **Alternative options**

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**What other options have we considered?**

We have considered not making any changes to our opening hours. However, the way our service is currently structured, coupled with our available budget resources, mean that we do not offer our customers a consistently high quality service. This includes, sometimes having to close our libraries at short notice because we cannot provide the right resources.

The council cannot afford to open our libraries for 6 days each and for a late evening and so we have had to consider the options using the feedback from our customers.

There may be opportunities to integrate and co-locate library services with other government and partner agencies who share library values in the future and we will continue to explore these opportunities.

Any changes would need to include an impact assessment for customers and would be subject to further consultation.

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### **What consideration is being given to impacts, including legal, statutory and any wider issues or risks?**

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**Impact on statutory provision**

DCMS as statutory superintendent will be kept informed at each stage of any change and will act as a critical friend. There are risks with making any changes to the current provision because libraries are more than just a place to borrow books; they offer community meeting space, events that tackle isolation and support speech & language development in early years, access to IT for those who don't own their own equipment and/or can't access the internet and are key provider of Sheffield's Warm Spaces. We hope that by making these changes to opening hours, we will extend the availability of library benefits and we will of course keep the changes under review.