

**Report for:** 10 December Cabinet

**Item number:** To be added by the Committee Section

**Title:** Review of Libraries Operating Hours

**Report authorised by :** Jess Crowe, Director of Culture, Strategy & Engagement

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**Ward(s) affected:** ALL

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Key decision

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1. This report sets out the results of the public consultation around different options proposed to vary the operating hours of the borough's libraries and recommends an in-principle decision to adopt revised Option 3, subject to consultation with affected staff, as the best option for the council to continue to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service within its reduced budget envelope.

## **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

- 2.1. We are extremely proud of and supportive of the nine libraries in Haringey. Unlike many other local authorities up and down the country, who have made swingeing cuts to their library service, we have protected them from the effect and impact of austerity and in recent years have invested nearly £5m to upgrade and make branch libraries accessible. Since 2010, 276 library buildings in England have closed without replacement: none of these have been in Haringey.
- 2.2. Despite huge financial pressures facing Haringey Council, we have protected libraries and maintained long opening hours since austerity began in 2010. We have had some of the longest library hours in London in recent years. Unfortunately, due to the ever increasing costs of adult and children's social care and the housing crisis which has pushed many residents into temporary accommodation, the point has been reached now where it is no longer sustainable to maintain such long hours, especially at times of the day when there aren't many people coming into our libraries.
- 2.3. This administration will make sure we make changes to our public services and assets in the fairest way possible – by prioritising the people who need public services most. Protecting our least well-off communities has been the guiding principle for the way we make these changes.

- 2.4. That's why we kept all of our nine libraries open through austerity – and why we are still keeping all our libraries open. We are not closing or selling libraries, but we are limiting opening hours at times when usage is lower.
- 2.5. In August, we launched a public consultation which ran to mid-October. The consultation focused on necessary adjustments to operating hours. This process was collaborative and evidence-based, looking both at library footfall analysis and feedback from residents, the Friends of Reading & Education (FORE) and other community groups.
- 2.6. We heard a strong preference from residents and library users to maintain lunchtime openings, create more consistent hours and prioritise Sunday and evening opening times. One key change to emphasise is that we will be keeping both Hornsey and Marcus Garvey library open on Sundays. We want to keep as much library space open as possible, especially for children and young people studying.
- 2.7. We have listened to what residents told us during the engagement process and are now proposing changes to our proposed schedule of opening hours which is contained in the paper.
- 2.8. Looking ahead, we are committed to developing a strategic plan to ensure libraries remain sustainable and fit for the future. This will include modernising library services, exploring more income generation opportunities and adapting to the evolving needs of our communities – particularly in the post-pandemic landscape. We are especially focused on engaging the next generation of library users.
- 2.9. While we have had to reduce the day-to-day staff costs of our libraries by reducing hours for now, we have invested in our library buildings in recent years and remain deeply committed to preserving these valued public assets.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### **3.1. Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 3.1.1. Consider the assessment set out in paragraph 4.1 and in more detail in paragraphs 6.60-6.79 of the council's statutory duty under Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service.
- 3.1.2. Note the conclusions of the detailed Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment and the potential impacts and mitigations identified in relation to these proposals, as set out in paragraph 4.2 and in more detail in paragraphs 6.36-6.47 and Appendices 1 and 2.
- 3.1.3. Note the engagement and consultation process carried out to gather public and community views on the two different options put forward, and the findings and analysis of that consultation, as set out in paragraph 4.3 and in more detail in paragraphs 6.6-6.35 and at Appendices 3 and 4.

- 3.1.4. Taking into account the findings of the consultation, the Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment, agree in principle to implement new Option 3 as set out in paragraph 4.4 and in further detail in paragraphs 6.48-6.59 of the report (namely that, informed by equity as the guiding principle, longer opening hours are retained in those libraries serving residents who are in greatest need of the service) from May 2025, subject to the outcome of consultation with affected staff.
- 3.1.5. Agree to delegate the final decision on Option 3 and the operating model and hours of the library service to the Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure, subject to the outcome of the staff consultation on the model recommended in this report. If changes in response to that consultation require significant deviation from the principles on which revised Option 3 is based, then the final decision should return to the Cabinet for consideration.
- 3.1.6. Agree that the findings of the detailed Needs Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and the consultation with residents and staff, together with earlier engagement exercises such as Wood Green and Tottenham Voices, the 2024/25 Budget Consultation and the new Borough Vision, should be used to inform the early development of the proposed libraries strategy, as set out in paragraph 4.5 and in more detail in paragraphs 6.87-6.97 of this report.

#### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1. The council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for those who live, work or study in the borough. The duty is supplemented by government guidance, which although not statutory, must still be taken into account. The guidance advises that changes to library services should be based on strategic plans and consideration of alternative delivery models, and on careful assessment of needs and consideration of impacts and mitigations.
- 4.2. To address how it will continue to deliver the library service in the context of both this duty and the council's challenging financial position, officers have undertaken a detailed Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment to inform the proposal in this report. Both highlight the importance of libraries for those residents facing disadvantage, who may rely more on libraries as safe, warm, welcoming spaces, where they are able to access information and free wifi, as well as books and other resources. These assessments identify important data about where residents with specific needs and characteristics live in the borough and they tell us who does and does not currently use library services and for what purposes.
- 4.3. The public consultation that was carried out between August and October 2024 has provided vital feedback on how consultees use the libraries and what they most value about them. The two options set out for consultation were based respectively on Equality (an equal reduction in hours for all libraries across the

borough: Option 1) and Equity (protecting the longest opening hours and greater access to libraries in Wood Green and Tottenham, as the areas where residents experience greatest disadvantage and deprivation and may rely to a greater extent on the services provided in the libraries: Option 2). The two options were based on consideration of data about who currently does and does not use our libraries, patterns of which libraries are most heavily used and at what times of day and days of the week, analysis of socio-economic and demographic data in the catchment areas for each library, and operational and staffing considerations. The consultation document is attached at Appendix 3, which gives further details on Options 1 and 2.

4.4. Officers consider that consultation feedback lends support to Option 2 relative to Option 1, based on responses to questions about the two options and the fact that users of the libraries that would see a greater reduction of hours under Option 2 were overrepresented among consultees. The consultation findings together with the Needs Assessment and findings of the EQIA have resulted in officers recommending a number of revisions to Option 2, as a new Option 3 which is under consideration in this report. The revised Option 3 mitigates the impact of reducing library hours specifically including the impact on those with protected characteristics. The proposed revisions are as follows:

4.4.1. **Maintaining lunchtime opening:** This will enable continuous access to all library services, without midday interruptions. For this to be possible, the library service will need to increase existing lone-working practices, and this will be a particular focus of the consultation with staff and Trade Unions.

4.4.2. **Reprioritising Sunday opening:** This will enable continued Sunday access from 12 – 4pm at Marcus Garvey and Hornsey libraries. Hornsey Library has the highest Sunday footfall of any of the three main libraries and Marcus Garvey Library serves the areas in greatest need. Reprioritising Sunday opening in this way will allow the additional staffing hours that would have otherwise been required to open either Wood Green or three branch libraries on Sundays, which were the original options consulted upon, to be redistributed to branch libraries during the week, which will mean that the amount by which branch library hours will be reduced during the week will be less. Maintaining Sunday opening in both the east and west of the borough enables us to respond to the organisational feedback about impacts of the proposals on libraries in the west of the borough with high usage, while maintaining our commitment to the principle of equity. Our data tells us that digital usage, use of free Wifi and PCs, and using the library as a space to study is high in both of these libraries, as well as stock issues being high in Hornsey.

4.4.3. **Reprioritising evening opening:** Under option 3, e under Option 3 compared to the original options consulted upon each of the main libraries (Wood Green, Hornsey and Marcus Garvey) will benefit from later evening opening until 7pm one day per week. Additionally, to create more after-school hours to support students who use library spaces for studying, the overall hours offered at Muswell Hill have been increased, as this was the

most heavily used branch library prior to its closure for refurbishment, and enables us to respond to organisational and individual responses which highlighted this point. The Council has taken into account the feedback about usage by young people, disabled users, users of ethnic backgrounds other than 'White' and those who are working, and therefore, together with the proposal that all libraries should stay open at least until 6pm on the weekdays when they are open, it is proposed that there are also three additional later opening weekday evenings at the main libraries.

**4.4.4. Exploring the implementation of a weekday self-service hour:**

Wood Green and Marcus Garvey libraries benefit from existing partners and security staff and so will have a self-service hour introduced each weekday except Wednesday, from 9am – 10am, subject to operational discussions with these partners. This allows the service to be compliant with health and safety practices as the building is already open and staffed albeit not by library staff and increases the overall availability of the service.

**4.4.5. Adjustment to opening hours to increase consistency:** On weekdays, all branch libraries will open at 9.30am on the weekdays that they are open. Save on Wednesdays, Wood Green and Marcus Garvey libraries will open at 9.00am for an hour of self-service (subject to the satisfactory outcome of the action at 4.4.4). Hornsey library will open at 10.00am. On Saturdays, all libraries will be open 10.00am to 5.00pm. This is in response to strong feedback from consultees that simplicity and ease of remembering the opening hours was important in encouraging usage.

**4.4.6.** It is important that affected library staff are consulted before a final decision is reached on the operating model for the library service. Staff have been engaged throughout the development of the proposals and formal staff consultation will take place, should Cabinet agree in principle to adopt Option 3 as set out in the report.

**4.5.** While this review of operating hours implements the council's agreed budget for 2024/25 onwards, Haringey Council remains committed to its strategic plan to develop a libraries strategy and put libraries on a sustainable footing for the longer term. There were many valuable suggestions put forward during this consultation and as part of earlier engagement and consultation exercises which should usefully inform the development of the strategy and these will not be lost. Using the principles which already underpin our Arts & Culture Strategy – Access, Collaboration, Equity, Growth, Lifelong Learning, Visibility & Representation – the council hopes to work positively to develop the libraries strategy with all those who want to see Haringey Libraries survive and thrive into the future.

## **5. Alternative options considered**

**5.1. The council could do nothing – not make any savings from libraries and make savings elsewhere:** Consultees to both the original budget consultation

and the more recent consultation on library operating hours have requested that the council should not make any reductions in the library service offer and should seek to make savings elsewhere. As the council is already having to make significant budget savings across all services and is also already proposing to raise council tax by the maximum permitted by law without triggering a referendum, and in light of the need for a fair allocation of resources, officers do not consider that the library service should be insulated from the council's legal obligation to set a balanced budget.

- 5.2. The suggestions put forward by consultees as alternative budget savings, for example by Friends of Highgate Library (Shepherds Hill), have been considered by officers as both potential alternatives and additional ways of meeting the council's continuing budget shortfall for 2025/26. However, some of these proposals would not in practice realise the savings suggested, and others have already been implemented, for example using libraries as polling stations and making savings in senior management across the council.
- 5.3. As the 2025/26 draft budget report (elsewhere on the same agenda as this report) indicates, the council continues to face a substantial budget gap and all options must therefore be considered to enable it to achieve a balanced budget. For these reasons, the 'do nothing' option and continuing with the existing library service provision unchanged is not recommended.
- 5.4. **Close libraries:** Other councils have had to consider closing libraries to make savings. In Haringey we are committed to keeping our libraries open and to keeping the buildings in council ownership so that these important community assets remain available for public and community benefit, so this option was discounted.
- 5.5. **Consultation Option 1:** This option, based on equality, prioritised even distribution of available hours, sharing available opening hours equally between the large or main libraries and the branch libraries, as the existing library service does. This Option ensured a library would always be open Monday to Saturday, within reasonable travelling distance. Under this Option, branch libraries would be closed on two weekdays each and closed for lunch every day. Only Wood Green library would be open on Sundays. This option would have delivered all of the cost savings.
- 5.6. This option was supported by a slightly smaller proportion of consultees than Consultation Option 2. Consultees perceived this option as fair and consistent in that all parts of the borough would have the same levels of access to the service. However, consultees recognised that it did not respond to levels of need and disadvantage in different parts of the borough, which is also identified in the Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment. Lunchtime closures were not supported and there were mixed views about whether Wood Green library was the right library to open on a Sunday. This option is therefore not recommended. Consultation feedback is discussed in more detail at Section 6 below.

**5.7. Consultation Option 2:** This option, based on equity, prioritised matching need with availability of the library service, resulting in the library service in Tottenham and Wood Green being the least affected by a reduction in library opening hours. This option aimed to address issues of digital exclusion as highlighted in the Needs Assessment and to maximise access to the library service where residents may face multiple disadvantages. Under this option, there would be variable opening patterns across the borough, with three branch libraries open on Sundays. This option would have delivered all of the cost savings.

5.8. This option was supported by a greater proportion of consultees than Consultation Option 1, albeit only by a small margin, and was felt to be fair by consultees as it prioritised addressing need and disadvantage within the council's reduced resources. Support for this option, based on the principle of equity is given more weight as most consultees came from areas of the borough served by libraries that would see the greatest reduction in opening hours. Amongst the organisational responses, the "Friends" group from the main library in the west of the borough, Hornsey Library, also supported Option 2 on grounds of equity. However, there were mixed views about whether it was right to open branch libraries rather than a main library on a Sunday, and residents felt that the variable opening patterns would be confusing for residents to remember and could drive down usage. The principle of equity behind this option is recommended but as a result of the findings of the consultation, Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment officers are recommending revisions to the detailed proposals in Option 2, under new Option 3, set out in detail in Section 6 below, which is the recommended option.

5.9. The consultation document is attached at Appendix 3 and gives further details on Options 1 and 2, including full proposed timetables and design principles which informed them. The consultation responses are summarised in the Consultation Report at Appendix 4.

5.10. **Alternative Delivery Models:** Two other options were considered at an earlier stage: self-service and community-led models. The first of these would involve the introduction of self-service technology and investment in other technologies, such as CCTV. It would mean there would be times where library staff were not present at some libraries. The second of these would involve developing services jointly with the local community, although libraries would remain part of the statutory library network. In essence, it would mean a greater reliance on volunteers rather than council staff to run and staff libraries.

5.11. These two options were consulted on as part of the council's budget consultation during December 2023 and January 2024. Due to consultees expressing concerns about the potential impacts of these models in terms of safety and loss of librarians' expertise, they were discounted not explored further. However, the opening hours consultation gave the public a further opportunity to comment on these possible alternative approaches. A clear theme from the organisational responses to the consultation was support for the council's decision not to pursue these options further and officers are

therefore not recommending these alternative delivery models as a way of sustaining the library service.

## **6. Background information**

- 6.1. This is a difficult time for library services across the whole country, which was highlighted in a recent House of Lords debate on 12 September 2024. During that debate the Minister, Baroness Twycross, highlighted that since 2010, according to official figures, 276 library buildings in England have closed without being replaced or relocated. Haringey can be proud that despite the reduction in operating hours proposed in this report, no library is being closed. Our commitment to develop a new libraries strategy is in line with the Government's approach. The previous Government committed to producing a national strategy for libraries but did not do so before the snap General Election, and the new Government have committed to engaging with local government, the Arts Council and national library organisations to understand the issues and policy priorities for libraries today. Haringey will ensure that as we develop our new strategy we also learn from and respond to these national strategic developments to ensure Haringey residents' views and experiences are influencing national libraries policy.
- 6.2. The reason for library closures and reductions in the library offer across the country is not hard to guess, and Haringey's financial challenges are mirrored in many other local authorities after fourteen years of austerity. The recent State of the Arts report outlines that between 2009-10 and 2020-21, per person in real terms, spending on British public libraries fell by 53%. Local government revenue funding of culture and related services decreased by 48% in England, alongside rising cost and demand pressures in the larger statutory services (especially social care).
- 6.3. Haringey's expenditure has fallen by less over the same period and it currently has the eighth highest expenditure per resident among its statistical neighbours, at just under £20 annually per resident. This places Haringey expenditure slightly above the London average and in the top half of all its statistical neighbours, in terms of annual spend per resident. Implementation of the proposals in this report will reduce the council's annual libraries budget by 16% and so our relative position is likely to worsen. We are aware that other councils amongst our statistical neighbours and across London have recently consulted on changes to library services, however, including Hackney, Enfield and Croydon, so we anticipate that other councils' spending will also fall. Baroness Twycross also confirmed in the House of Lords debate that 31 councils have engaged with DCMS about proposed changes to service provision during the current year (April- September inclusive). We have similarly engaged with DCMS.
- 6.4. In Haringey, we are proud of our libraries. The council has maintained longer opening hours than most of its statistical neighbours. In recent years, the council has made significant investments into library buildings to make them more welcoming, accessible and user friendly. It is the council's plan for this investment to continue for the benefit of communities in years to come. Whilst



Haringey has managed to protect libraries from cuts during the long years of austerity, due to severe constraints on council funding nationally, the council is now unable to sustain the current operating model.

- 6.5. As part of its annual budget-setting and due to the very difficult national financial situation affecting all councils, the council had to agree new savings of almost £9 million to come from a wide range of services during the current year 2024/25. As part of this broad package of savings, it was agreed to reduce the libraries operating budget by £675,000, or around 7% of the total new council savings for 2024/25, based on a review of library opening hours. At its meeting of 4 March 2024, Full Council considered the advice of officers which noted that, before deciding whether, how and when to implement savings proposals, the Council may be required to take further steps (such as assessment of equality impacts and public consultation).

### **Public consultation**

- 6.6. The council carried out a public consultation from August to October 2024 about the best and fairest way to make this saving. Two different options for varying library opening hours were proposed, based on consideration of data about who currently does and does not use our libraries, patterns of which libraries are most heavily used and at what times of day and days of the week, analysis of socio-economic and demographic data in the catchment areas for each library, and operational and staffing considerations. Consultees were also invited to comment on other options.
- 6.7. Officers also carried out initial qualitative engagement with library users, Friends of Libraries groups and other groups, including library staff, and spoke to neighbouring library services in other boroughs to understand their practice. The consultation team contacted non-users via a range of partners, including primary and secondary schools and post-16 colleges, including independent schools and youth centres, as well as speaking at public events, including a Speaker's Day at Marcus Garvey Library.
- 6.8. The consultation document is attached at Appendix 3, which gives further details on Options 1 and 2, including full proposed timetables and the design principles which informed them.
- 6.9. The consultation report at Appendix 4 sets out the detailed findings of the public consultation. Key highlights from the responses to the consultation are:
- Respondents included a diverse range of residents, including responses from children, parents, the elderly and people with disabilities and other protected characteristics. Consultees were invited to provide demographic information which has informed the Council's updated equalities analysis.
  - The total number of consultation responses received and considered was 1376, which equates to approximately 7% of our 17,700 active users, and 2% of our 65,000 active borrowers. Active users are defined as those who have borrowed books, accessed PCs, or downloaded content from our digital library, such as e-books or e-newspapers, within the last 12 months.

Active borrowers are defined as those who have solely borrowed books in the last 36 months (which excludes digital content).

- 1362 responses were received through the council's online engagement platform [haringeylibraries.commonplace.com](http://haringeylibraries.commonplace.com). Of these 1362 responses, 116 were hard copy questionnaires, manually entered onto the project site by officers.
- 8 organisational and group responses were received and are included in the consultation report. 6 individual responses were also received, 2 of these as formal letters and 4 as emails to [consultations@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@haringey.gov.uk); these are included in the consultation report
- 109 people were responsible for 280 duplicate responses. To avoid potential skewing of the demographic information of respondents, duplicate respondent IDs have been removed from the dataset.
- The highest number of online respondents came from the west of the borough: in N10, N8, N22, N4 postcodes, whilst the postcode with the highest number of hard copy respondents was from the N17 postcode in the east.
- The largest group responding by age, was 35 to 44 years, followed in equal numbers by both 45-54 and 65-74 age bands.
- Among those who specified their gender, female respondents to the online consultation were more than twice that of male respondents.
- In terms of ethnicity, by far the largest group of respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.
- Respondents who submitted hard copy responses were in the older age groups, with 60-74 year olds being the highest and 75+ years being the next.

6.10. The top six reasons for library visits from survey respondents were:

- Browsing, searching and/or requesting stock (34.8%)
- Finding space to study or work (14.9%)
- Accessing newspapers and/or informative leaflets (11.4%)
- Attending or hosting an event, group or class (11.2%)
- Using the public computers, printing, scanning, photocopying (11%)
- Using the free Wi-fi (9.3%)

6.11. The range of activities mentioned in reasons for library visits included: Children's activities/reading (28.9% of those responding mentioned this), Reading (13.1%), Borrowing of books/films/toys (11%), Studying/Homework (11%), Groups/Clubs/Classes (12.6%), Socialising (3.6%), place of warmth / For respite (3.6%), Use Printer / Wifi (2.6%), Seeking help from librarians (3.6%), and using the bathroom (2.6%).

6.12. Access to public computers is the most frequent reason for using the library in the ages 16 and under, followed by access to free wifi and access to stock. Access to free wifi is important across all age groups, but is most important to consultees in the 34 years and under age range.

### **Feedback on the two core principles – equality or equity**

- 6.13. Fairness & inclusion emerged as a strong theme, with consultation responses suggesting somewhat more support across the borough for an equitable approach, based on need.
- 6.14. The Needs Assessment and EQIA indicate that the greatest need is more pronounced in Wood Green and Tottenham in the centre / east of the borough. These indicators include receipt of benefits, lower proficiency in English, child poverty and Level 1 or no qualifications, as well as higher digital exclusion. It should be noted that these characteristics are under-represented in the reported characteristics of the consultation respondents, who are largely not in receipt of benefits, have Level 4 qualifications and cite English as their preferred language, as well as coming mostly from postcodes in the west of the borough.
- 6.15. The EQIA and Needs Assessment tell us that residents in deprived areas are likely to find it harder to respond to online surveys because of the issues identified around digital exclusion and language barriers. The consultation documents and survey were made available in hard copies and more paper responses to the survey were handed in at libraries in Tottenham. Officers also carried out outreach events for example at pensioners meetings, the sixth form college and a careers fair to reach non-library-users and to raise awareness and seek views from those who may not use online surveys.
- 6.16. Respondents supporting Option 1 cited the fairness of the approach in reducing hours equally across all libraries in the borough: 17.5% of consultees responding to the question about the advantages of Option 1 raised the theme of fairness. However, fairness means different things to different people, as of respondents answering the question on what they saw as advantages of Option 2, 32.5% raised the theme of fairness (15.1% specifically raising prioritising areas of need and 9.5% percent specifically raising issues relating to the east of the borough).
- 6.17. 19.1% of those answering the question about the disadvantages of Option 1 raised issues of fairness (although only 6.2% and 3.4% raised the specific issues of prioritising areas of need and differences between the east and west of the borough, respectively). 17.4% of those answering the question about the disadvantages of Option 2 raised issues of fairness (9.8% specifically raising issues about the east and west of the borough and 12.6% raising issues relating to need and inequality, including for example comments about the needs of those in the West).
- 6.18. Overall a slightly higher proportion of consultees preferred Option 2 (Equity model, based on need) to Option 1 (Equality model, based on equal reduction across all libraries), as discussed in more detail below. Again it must be borne in mind that individuals from areas of greater need within the borough were under-represented among respondents.

## **Key Findings and Themes emerging from the consultation**

- 6.19. Of the 722 people responding to the question, 'To what extent do you support Option 1?':
- 349 (48%) people were unsupportive (137 / 19%) or very unsupportive (212 / 29%)
  - 232 (33%) people were supportive (170 / 24%) or very supportive (62 / 9%)
  - 141 (20%) people were neutral
- 6.20. Of the 687 people responding to the question, 'To what extent do you support Option 2?':
- 337 (49%) people were unsupportive (161 / 23%) or very unsupportive (176 / 26%)
  - 170 (36%) people were supportive (157 / 23%) or very supportive (88 / 13%)
  - 105 (15%) people were neutral
- 6.21. When asked, "Which Option works better for you and why?", 123 respondents specified Option 1 and 138 respondents specified Option 2. 116 responses to this question indicated that neither option was preferred.
- 6.22. More people answered the question about support in relation to Option 1 than Option 2 so members should note that in absolute terms more people were supportive of Option 1 than Option 2. However, 36% of consultees responding to questions about Option 2 were supportive or very supportive of it vs 33% of those responding to Option 1 who were supportive or very supportive of it. More people favoured Option 2 than Option 1 when asked which option works better for you and why.
- 6.23. Officers therefore suggest that responses to these questions lend more support to proceeding with a model based on Option 2, and the principle of equity underlying it, than Option 1, in particular since users of libraries that would see a greater reduction in hours under Option 2 were overrepresented among consultees. Concerns about the importance of libraries for those facing disadvantage were a theme in the organisational responses to the consultation. In addition, the "Friends" for the main library in the west of the borough, Hornsey Library, on balance supported Option 2 on the basis of equity, while raising concerns about some of the details. Members should however note that more consultees (48% and 49%, respectively) were unsupportive than supportive when asked specifically about levels of support for each option.

## **Other feedback**

- 6.24. Consultees displayed mixed sentiments in their responses ranging from reluctant acceptance to outright dissatisfaction with the proposals. Whilst some consultees agreed with the proposal to reduce library hours as the least damaging in the financial situation faced by the council, others expressed the view that the council should look at other services or efficiencies, in order to achieve the savings. As above, more people opposed the proposals overall than supported them. In response to the general question in the consultation

about how the Council should achieve savings and the question inviting any other feedback on the Council's proposals, significant proportions of respondents expressed a general lack of support and opposition to any reduction in opening hours.

- 6.25. Consultees emphasised the crucial role of libraries as community hubs, safe spaces, warm spaces, and sources of educational and digital resources, and as being one of the few public spaces that are truly accessible to all. Consultees also flagged the importance of the library service's contribution to literacy levels, social mobility, and community well-being for children, families, and people facing disadvantage, as well as working people, particularly in the context of the lunchtime, evening and weekend library usage.
- 6.26. There were concerns about inconsistency of hours and opening times, and these being difficult to remember. There were concerns that the impact of lunchtime closures would further reduce attendance and leave people without comparable alternative space, and a preference for opening later instead. Concerns were raised about the impact of reduced hours on vulnerable groups, particularly those facing digital exclusion and those who rely on libraries for social interaction and warmth. Concerns relating to individuals with particular protected characteristics are discussed further below and in the updated equality impact assessment.
- 6.27. Differing views were expressed over Sunday openings, with some preferring to keep a main library open, whilst others had a preference for some branch libraries being open.
- 6.28. There was a strong desire for later closing times to enable working people and young people to use the services, especially those young people who use the library spaces for study or revision.

### **Organisational and individual responses provided other than by way of a consultation questionnaire**

- 6.29. A number of organisational responses and responses from individual consultees provided other than by way of a consultation were also received. These are appended in full to the consultation report at Appendix 4. The following is a non-exhaustive list of themes emerging from organisational responses:
- 6.29.1. Suggestions as to alternative ways of realising savings. More than one consultee referred to a document submitted to the Council in late February 2024 in response to the Council's budget consultation (albeit it was submitted some time after the consultation had closed) by Friends of Highgate Library – Shepherds Hill setting out a range of alternative savings or revenue-raising suggestions said to be worth roughly £46m.
- 6.29.2. Concerns about the data relied on in the pre-consultation version of the Needs Assessment, including the lack of occupancy data, concerns that footfall calculations for Wood Green and Marcus Garvey libraries

might include residents visiting only nearby customer centres not the libraries, the use of data partly covering the school holiday period, and lack of a separate analysis of Saturday and Sunday data for those libraries open both days at the weekend.

- 6.29.3. Concerns that Option 2 unfairly penalises the West of the borough, without taking into account higher existing rates of usage in the West.
- 6.29.4. Broadly opposition among “Friends” groups to the proposals, including Friends of Marcus Garvey Library, Friends of Highgate Library – Shepherd’s Hill, and the umbrella group, FORE. One “Friends” group (Friends of Hornsey Library) recommended the adoption of Option 2 to reflect greater need in the East of the borough, but proposed alternative Sunday opening hours.
- 6.29.5. Concerns about the wider benefits of libraries including in terms of social mobility, impacts on life chances, health and economic outcomes, access to trustworthy knowledge, support for education and learning, cultural enrichment, community engagement, social cohesion, and digital inclusion.
- 6.29.6. Concerns about particular impacts on library users on low incomes, children and young people (including in respect of evening opening hours), and the black community, as well as the negative impacts on particular groups already identified in the Council’s pre-consultation EqlA and how they would be mitigated. Several consultees commented that the statement in that document that “The EqlA demonstrates the proposal is robust, and there is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact” was contradictory.
- 6.29.7. Concerns about the proposals’ impacts on the Council’s successful bid to become the London Borough of Culture in 2027.
- 6.29.8. Concerns about the proposals’ impacts on staff.
- 6.29.9. Support for the Council’s decision not to pursue the option of self-service and volunteer-led libraries following the budget consultation.
- 6.30. Some key themes arising from individual responses provided other than in the format of a completed consultation questionnaire include:
  - 6.30.1. One young library user raising concerns about the impact of potential evening closures on their ability to study.
  - 6.30.2. A suggestion that volunteers could be added to paid staff to help maintain and/or extend opening hours.
  - 6.30.3. Concerns about timetabling issues at specific libraries.

**Five particularly strong themes emerged from all the respondents' feedback. These related to:**

**6.31. Lunchtime closures**

There was strong resistance to the proposed lunchtime closures, with respondents keen to preserve an uninterrupted library service during the day. 8.1% of people who responded to the question about the disadvantages of Option 1 raised lunchtime closures, and 11.8% of consultees who responded to the question about making changes to Option 1 raised the same issue. The respective figures concerning Option 2 are 8.3% and 7.5%. Some consultees, including among the individual responses, indicated willingness to use a self-service option or to have volunteers present to counteract this, but only during the proposed lunchtime closure periods. Some respondents caveated that suggestion by highlighting the importance of library staff and their role in the library service offer.

**6.32. Sunday openings**

A range of differing views and proposals were made by respondents to this question. These included calls to keep more libraries open on Sundays. Some felt these should be amongst the main libraries (Wood Green, Marcus Garvey, Hornsey), whilst others expressed a preference for their local branch libraries to remain open. Some consultees proposed trading a weekday closure to preserve Sunday openings. Some felt that Sunday openings were not a priority. It is difficult to discern a clear trend in terms of the overall balance of opinion on Sunday opening hours. However, this was an issue of particular concern to consultees (as evidenced by the number of people and organisations, including Friends of Hornsey Library, raising this theme) and so we have given careful further thought to this element of the proposed model following the consultation

**6.33. Later evening openings**

There was considerable appetite for maintaining later evening openings in consideration of working residents and students who use library spaces for studying and revision, including from the young person who submitted an individual response. Of those answering the question about the disadvantages of Option 1, 4.7% specifically raised the theme of evening closures, and some of the 7.4% raising concerns about the impact on children, young people and families raised related issues. 9.4% of consultees responding to the question about possible changes to Option 1 and 8.7% of consultees responding to the same question in relation to Option 2 referred to evening hours. Some consultees specifically suggested extending opening hours on at least one weekday evening until 7pm, particularly in large libraries.

**6.34. Consistency of opening hours**

Consultees responding to the questions about both Option 1 and Option 2 raised issues concerning consistency and memorability of opening hours. In particular, 9.8% of those responding to the question about the disadvantages of Option 2 referred to this theme. Narrative responses highlighted concerns, for example, about inconsistent opening hours potentially leading to confusion.

### **6.35. Feedback relating to specific libraries**

There were strong representations from users of particular libraries about the value they place on their local library, with most responses coming from users of Stroud Green & Harringay (251), Hornsey (249) and Alexandra Park (223), followed by users of Muswell Hill and Marcus Garvey with 110 each. Individual “Friends” groups made representations on behalf of their libraries as well as commenting on the proposals overall. One of the ward councillors submitted detailed comments on the proposals in relation to Muswell Hill library.

### **Updated Needs Assessment**

6.36. A detailed Needs Assessment is an essential element of the background information needed to enable the council to decide on the future shape of the library service and helps ensure we are complying with our statutory duty and with government guidance. The Needs Assessment attached at Appendix 1 was carried out to inform the original design of the operating hours options on which the council has recently consulted. It has been updated to reflect the most recent usage and occupancy data available and in response to specific points raised in the consultation.

6.37. The Needs Assessment analyses current individual library usage patterns and sets Haringey’s library service within the national and London context as well as in the context of local needs. Initial analysis compared Haringey’s service with other councils in The Libraries Consortium, and concern was raised during early engagement with the Friends of Reading and Education (FORE) that these boroughs might not share the same characteristics or levels of need as Haringey. The Needs Assessment has therefore compared Haringey’s provision with those identified by CIPFA as our statistical neighbours. Haringey has the average number of libraries among its statistical neighbours, however its total current operating hours per week are 35% higher than the average among the same neighbours and its average opening hours per library are 30% higher. The proposals in this report would see an approximately 26% reduction in Haringey’s total opening hours, and this would leave us still slightly above the average total opening hours amongst our statistical neighbours.

6.38. Looking at current usage patterns, there is some variation between the busiest days and times amongst Haringey’s library times. The data available during the consultation showed that the quietest hours for all libraries were before closing. Consultees and some organisational responses raised concerns that footfall data, which counts people entering libraries, might be under-estimating continued usage and occupancy of libraries right up until closing time, because people might not arrive at a library in the hour before it closes, but the library might continue to be well-used by people who had arrived earlier.

6.39. The council has taken into account this feedback from the consultation, and the detailed charts in the updated Needs Assessment now include both



updated footfall data and also occupancy data for the three months between August and October 2024. These have been analysed and show that:

- On weekdays average hourly footfall is still lowest across all libraries during the hour before closure, 6.00pm to 7.00pm
- On weekdays average hourly occupancy is lowest during the first hour of opening across all but two libraries, with broadly similar patterns of occupancy numbers gradually climbing to a high point around 3.00pm to 4.00pm before declining again. The exceptions are Wood Green and Alexandra Park which see their highest average numbers during the morning period and their quietest level of occupancy during the hour before closure. It is also worth noting that St Ann's remains at a fairly high level of occupancy right up until closing time, reflecting what we had already noted in terms of PC and wifi usage in that library.
- At the weekend (Saturday for branches, Saturday and Sunday for mains), there is more of a mixed footfall picture, with average footfall lowest during the hour before closure in all libraries except Hornsey and Wood Green, where visitor numbers are lower during the first two hours of opening, and Alexandra Park, where there is a small spike in average footfall during the last hour.
- At the weekend, average hourly occupancy is lowest during the first hour of opening across all but two libraries, the exceptions in this instance being Wood Green, where the quietest hour is again the hour before closure, and Stroud Green & Harringay, where the first and last hours of opening are broadly equal quietest in terms of occupancy. As on weekdays, St Ann's remains well-occupied until closing time.
- While there are broadly similar patterns of footfall and occupancy across the libraries, it is important to remember that the average actual numbers for each library are very varied, ranging from lows of an average occupancy rate of 0.1 and 0.4 people during some hours in Alexandra Park and Highgate on Saturdays to a high of 100 people in the library during some hours in Wood Green on weekdays (acknowledging that these numbers may include people waiting to visit the Customer Service Centre or visiting other organisations in the building) and average occupancy rates of 30 per hour at their highest in Marcus Garvey and Hornsey.

6.40. It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from these findings as the first and last hours of opening are broadly mirror images of each other in terms of occupancy and footfall, with visitors gradually arriving during the first hours and gradually leaving during the last hours, with slightly more people present overall towards the end of the day. The EQIA notes that most groups report higher usage during weekday evening than weekday mornings, however those that don't include consultees with characteristics of socio-economic disadvantage (for whom responses to the EQIA show that weekday mornings are significantly more frequently used than other periods during weekdays, including weekday evenings) who are also under-represented in the survey respondent numbers. Earlier opening also benefits families with young children who visit after school drop-offs of older children, shown in the Alexandra Park data for example which is close to a number of schools. Also important to factor into this analysis is the strong preference for consistency of opening hours shown by some consultees, and the low footfall and occupancy numbers at

some branch libraries on Saturdays, particularly first thing in the morning. Proposed revised opening and closing hours, reflecting this analysis, have been incorporated into Option 3.

6.41. The Needs Assessment provides information and analysis of the people who use and do not use the libraries currently. This data shows that women are more likely to be registered library users than men, and white British people are more likely to be registered than non-white British people. Additionally, children and young people are overrepresented within the library's users, with 0–21 year-olds far more likely to be registered users than any other age groups, all of whom are underrepresented. The council has actively encouraged children and young people to join and use their local library through initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge and Library Lates, so this over-representation is at least in part the result of policy decisions.

6.42. The consultation feedback strongly emphasised the importance of libraries as free, safe, welcoming public spaces particularly for people on low incomes or who may have different vulnerabilities such as health conditions, social isolation or fuel poverty. The Needs Assessment demonstrates where in the borough people with these characteristics are more likely to live and therefore where there may be more people who would benefit from retaining greater access to library services. The chart below is taken from the Needs Assessment and illustrates the socio-economic imbalance in the borough and where the need for access to libraries is likely to be greatest. This evidence has led the council to follow the principle of equity in exploring ways of maintaining longer opening hours in the libraries in the centre and east of the borough to support this greater need for access to library services.

Sociodemographic characteristic	Catchment Areas									Haringey total/ average
	East			Central			West			
	Coombes Croft	Marcus Garvey	St Ann's	Alexandra Park	Wood Green	Muswell Hill	Highgate	Hornsey	Stroud Green & Harringay	
% Population w/ long term illness or disability	14.7%	13.2%	14.7%	11.4%	14.6%	12.1%	11.9%	13.4%	13.7%	13.7%
Average Indices of Multiple Deprivation: Overall – score	45.2	35.6	29.3	12.1	31.7	13.0	14.5	17.3	24.1	28.0
% Claimant count (aged 16-64)	12.3%	7.7%	7.8%	3.4%	7.6%	2.9%	3.0%	4.3%	6.1%	6.9%
% Population aged 16-65 on Universal Credit	39%	25%	26%	9%	24%	9%	8%	11%	16%	21%
% children in absolute low income	27%	21%	22%	7%	25%	6%	5%	8%	15%	19%
% children in relative low income	35%	27%	27%	8%	30%	7%	7%	10%	17%	24%
% Overcrowded households	29.6%	24.7%	25.6%	10.4%	22.9%	11.7%	11.4%	14.1%	21.3%	20.7%

% Households in 'fuel poverty'	7.3%	7.4%	6.7%	4.0%	7.3%	4.8%	4.8%	4.9%	6.1%	6.5%
% No qualifications	28.9%	23.3%	21.7%	7.7%	22.4%	8.8%	6.5%	8.8%	13.5%	18.5%
% Only Level 1 qualifications	9.6%	8.5%	8.1%	3.9%	7.7%	3.7%	2.9%	4.3%	5.6%	6.8%
% Pop. cannot speak English well or at all	11.2%	9.5%	8.9%	1.4%	9.1%	1.8%	1.3%	2.1%	5.7%	7.1%

#### KEY

Above Haringey average	Close to Haringey average	Below Haringey average
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6.43. As well as data around footfall, usage and the characteristics of users, the Needs Assessment provides valuable insights about the importance of digital services offered by the libraries. The small branch libraries of Coombes Croft and St Ann's in the east of the borough have a significantly higher number of PC logins as a proportion of registered users than the other libraries. This implies a high demand for digital provision in those areas of the borough, which aligns with borough-wide data on digital exclusion, also set out in the Needs Assessment. Again, this evidence has led the council to follow the principle of equity in seeking to maintain longer opening hours in the libraries in the east of the borough to support digital inclusion.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

6.44. Officers undertook a detailed Equality Impact Assessment prior to consultation which evaluated the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on individuals with different protected characteristics. The Council has continued to have due regard to the equality objectives set out in s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010<sup>1</sup>. A detailed update to the EQIA has been produced, drawing on consultation feedback to further evaluate likely equality impacts. Officers have drawn on this analysis in designing revised proposed opening hours (i.e. Option 3).

6.45. The key considerations / mitigations in relation to library opening hours from an equalities assessment of the consultation responses can be summarised as follows:

#### Age:

- **Consider maintaining some evening hours:** This is important to avoid disproportionately impacting people aged under 25.
- **Remain open during lunchtimes:** Especially on Saturdays, as it is a peak time for most age groups.

<sup>1</sup> The need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited under the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and those who do not.

- **Consider age-specific preferences:** In the responses, younger and working-age groups favour afternoon and evening hours, while older groups prefer late mornings and early afternoons.

**Ethnicity:**

- **Consider maintaining some evening hours:** This would avoid potentially disproportionately impacting ethnic groups other than the "White" cohort, as other ethnic groups particularly preferred evenings.

**Disability:**

- **Consider maintaining some evening hours:** This is a more frequent usage time for disabled individuals compared to 9-11 am.

**Pregnancy / maternity:**

- **Preserve daytime and weekend access:** This would avoid disproportionately impacting parents and carers of under 5s.
- **Consider maintaining some evening hours:** Particularly Monday-Wednesday, for parents/carers of SEND children.

**Sex:**

- **Preserve daytime and weekend access:** to avoid disproportionately impacting women.

**Socioeconomic Status:**

- **Protect hours in the centre and east of the borough**
- **Maintain morning opening (9-11 am):** This group frequently uses libraries in the mornings.
- **Remain open during lunchtimes:** This better accommodates this group's usage patterns.

**Other Recommendations:**

- **Give full consideration to existing targeted provision:** Pay attention to how changes might affect activities programmed for specific groups within the community, including external lets.

6.46. In response to the EQIA findings and analysis, revised Option 3 proposes a number of changes to the libraries operating model to mitigate the effects of the overall reduction in opening hours on residents and library users with protected characteristics. In particular, adjustments have been recommended specifically in order to mitigate equality impacts relating to evening and after-school opening hours (relevant to age, ethnicity, disability, and pregnancy/maternity), lunchtime opening (age and socioeconomic status), and morning opening (socioeconomic status). This is set out in the paragraphs below covering revised Option 3.

6.47. The revised Option 3 has also been assessed against the current schedules for groups and activities in all libraries for any potentially disproportionate impacts. Where libraries run targeted groups and activities on days proposed for closure under the post-consultation option, mitigations include maintaining capacity to reschedule groups and activities to a different day and offering out of hours lets. In future, these mitigations could be

expanded to include partnerships with other services, meaning the building could remain open on days when the library service is closed. The proposed libraries strategy will develop these options in partnership with other services, external partners, community groups and Friends groups.

### **Changes proposed to original proposals: revised Option 3**

- 6.48. The service has considered carefully the main themes, concerns and data emerging from the consultation responses and the updated Equalities Impact Assessment and Needs Assessment and is proposing a revised model - Option 3. The adapted post consultation proposal has been assessed for any potentially disproportionate negative impacts on those with protected characteristics (see paragraphs 6.55 - 6.56 below).
- 6.49. The recommended changes to the operating model are based on adopting an equity-focused approach as the main design principle, as with Option 2. This prioritises areas with demonstrated higher needs, by implementing extended hours compared with the hours originally consulted on and retaining the longest opening hours in Wood Green and Tottenham in the east of the borough. The revised Option 3 mitigates the impact of reducing library hours specifically including the impact on those with protected characteristics.
- 6.50. **Recommended changes to the original proposals are:**
- 6.50.1. Maintaining lunchtime opening: it is no longer proposed to implement lunchtime closures. This will enable continuous access to all library services, without midday interruptions. The library service had not previously considered this to be possible, but in response to consultation feedback has revisited it and considers it feasible by implementing staggered lunch breaks and lone-working over the lunch period in some libraries. Facilitating this will involve increasing existing lone-working practices and will therefore be a particular focus of the consultation with staff and Trade Unions.
- 6.50.2. Reprioritising Sunday opening: it is proposed to maintain Sunday access from 12 – 4pm at Hornsey and Marcus Garvey libraries. While consultation views were split on Sunday opening, on balance we support those in favour of keeping a larger main library open as these provide more space and other facilities and wider availability and choice of stock than branches. Our data and the consultation feedback tells us that digital usage, use of free Wifi and PCs, and demand for using the library as a space to study is particularly high in Hornsey and Marcus Garvey Libraries, and Hornsey has the highest number of books and other stock issued. Hornsey library has the highest Sunday footfall of any of the three main libraries and requires fewer staff to operate than Wood Green Library. Reprioritising Sunday opening in this way will allow the additional staffing hours that would have otherwise been required to open either Wood Green or three branch libraries on Sundays, which were the original options consulted upon, to be redistributed to branch libraries during the week. This will mean that some branch library opening hours during the week

can be increased, responding to concerns expressed by consultees and in the organizational and individual responses about loss of access in these areas.

6.50.3. Reprioritising evening hours: evening open hours under Option 3 have been extended over those proposed under Option 2, by offering one later evening opening until 7pm, at each of the three main libraries (Wood Green, Hornsey and Marcus Garvey). This responds to consultation feedback, including specific feedback about usage by young people, disabled users, users of ethnic backgrounds other than 'White' and those who are working.

6.50.4. Enhancing after-school availability, by increasing provision at Muswell Hill library (as against the proposed hours in Options 1 and 2). This library is close to secondary schools and is well used by children and young people, with a particularly active children's library. Consultees and organizational and individual responses highlighted data that indicated that Muswell Hill before its closure for refurbishment had the highest user numbers of all the branch libraries, performing better than Marcus Garvey on some measures. Along with the later opening hours in the three main libraries, rethinking the offer for Muswell Hill will ensure after-school hours are optimised to support students who use library spaces for studying, as well as meeting the needs of working residents.

6.50.5. Exploring the implementation of a weekday self-service hour: to extend opening hours at Wood Green and Marcus Garvey libraries over those proposed in Option 2, it is recommended to introduce a self-service hour each weekday (save Wednesday) from 9am – 10am. These libraries benefit from existing partners and security staff who would already be on site at this time. Subject to operational consultation with the services responsible, this change would allow the service to be compliant with health and safety practices as the building would already be open and staffed albeit not by library staff, increasing the overall availability of the service.

6.50.6. Ensuring greater consistency in opening hours over those proposed under Option 2: On weekdays, all branch libraries will open at 9.30am on the days that they are open. Other than Wednesdays, Wood Green and Marcus Garvey libraries will open at 9.00am for an hour of self-service. Hornsey library will open at 10.00am. On Saturdays, all libraries will be open 10.00am to 5.00pm and on Sundays, Hornsey and Marcus Garvey will be open 12.00pm to 4.00pm.

6.51. If the changes described above are adopted, Option 3's revised opening hours for Haringey's libraries would be as set out in the table below:

### Proposed Library Opening Hours

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Hours per week
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<b>Wood Green*</b>	9am - 6pm	9am - 6pm	10am - 7pm	9am - 6pm	9am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	closed	52
<b>Alexandra Park</b>	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	closed	9.30am - 6pm	closed	10am - 5pm	closed	32.5
<b>Muswell Hill</b>	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	closed	9.30am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	closed	41

<b>Marcus Garvey*</b>	9am - 6pm	9am - 6pm	10am - 6pm	9am - 7pm	9am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	12pm - 4pm	56
<b>Coombes Croft</b>	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	closed	49.5
<b>St Ann's</b>	9.30am - 6pm	closed	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	closed	41

<b>Hornsey</b>	10am - 6pm	10am - 7pm	10am - 6pm	10am - 6pm	10am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	12pm - 4pm	52
<b>Stroud Green &amp; Harringay</b>	9.30am - 6pm	closed	9.30am - 6pm	closed	9.30am - 6pm	10am - 5pm	closed	32.5
<b>Highgate</b>	9.30am - 6pm	9.30am - 6pm	closed	9.30am - 6pm	closed	10am - 5pm	closed	32.5

6.52. This report highlights Haringey's strong performance in maintaining longer library opening hours than most of its statistical neighbours despite the long years of austerity. Current opening hours are spelt out in detail in the Consultation Document at Appendix 3. The original proposals on which we consulted during August-October 2024 would have meant greater reductions in the total number of hours when the libraries were open, with Option 1 (Equality) leading to an almost 39% reduction and Option 2 (Equity) meaning a nearly 34% reduction.

6.53. Consultees fed back their desire for the libraries to remain open for longer, whether through not closing at lunchtimes or through staying open later in the evenings. The council has listened to that feedback and reconsidered the original proposals. The revised Option 3 set out in this report redistributes opening hours to facilitate longer opening hours in all bar one library. The service reduction under Option 3 is now less than 26%, as set out in the table below.

Option	Hours	% Reduction
Current	525	-
Option 1	322	38.7%
Option 2	348	33.7%
Post Consultation Option	389	25.9%

- 6.54. Primarily through maintaining lunchtime opening, the revised Option 3 model sees an increase in hours for all nine libraries, in comparison with both previous Option 1 and Option 2, other than Highgate by comparison with Option 2 which was half an hour longer due to the Sunday opening in branch libraries in that option.

<b>LIBRARY</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Post consultation Option 3</b>
Wood Green	61	52	48	52
Alexandra Park	57	29	30.5	32.5
Muswell Hill	57	29	29	41
Marcus Garvey	61	48	48	56
Coombes Croft	57	29	43.25	49.5
St Ann's	57	29	41.25	41
Hornsey	61	48	48	52
Stroud Green & Harringay	57	29	27	32.5
Highgate	57	29	33	32.5

- 6.55. The table below shows where Haringey would sit in comparison to statistical neighbours' current performance – noting that a number of these may change in the near future. Haringey would drop four places in the table and would still have slightly above average total opening hours compared to its statistical neighbours, as incorporating our proposed rather than current hours leads to the average falling to 383 hours per week.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Number libraries</b>	<b>of Total week</b>	<b>hours per</b>	<b>Average hours per</b>
<b>Average CURRENT</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>45</b>	
Enfield	17	686	40.36	
Redbridge	10	597	54.27	
Newham	10	579	57.9	
<b>Haringey CURRENT</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>58.3</b>	
Hounslow	11	459	41.73	
Waltham Forest	8	442	55.25	
Ealing	10	398	33.12	
<b>Haringey PROPOSED</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>43.22</b>	
Sutton	8	378	47.25	
Hackney	8	373	46.6	
Tower Hamlets	6	360	60	
Merton	7	347	49.57	
Lewisham	10	326	29.68	
Brent	6	308	51.33	
Croydon	13	296	22.77	
Kingston	7	250	35.71	



Barking & Dagenham	6	245	40.83
Hammersmith & Fulham	5	242	48.4
Harrow	6	214	35.5

### Consideration of Equality Impacts and Mitigations under revised Option 3

6.56. The adapted post consultation proposal has been assessed against the findings from the public consultation along with the current schedules for groups and activities in all libraries for any potentially disproportionate impacts. Where the design of the revised proposal itself mitigates potential impacts, these are set out below. Where any disproportionate impacts remain, the Council considers these are objectively justified in light of the proposal's aims.

6.56.1. **Age:** Maintaining lunchtime openings to avoid potentially disproportionate impacts on older people and working age people. Maintaining at least one evening opening until 7pm weekly in each grouping's large library to avoid potentially disproportionate impact on younger people visiting libraries after school.

6.56.2. **Disability:** Maintaining some evening opening hours and until 7pm weekly in each grouping's large library to avoid potentially disproportionate impact on disabled people, some of whom may prefer to visit from 5pm onwards. For SEND children visiting with parents or carers, any potentially disproportionate impacts are mitigated in the new proposal by maintaining lunch time opening and maintaining early opening from 9am through a self-service hour in most large libraries and opening at 9.30 a.m. in branch libraries. Where libraries run targeted groups and activities on days proposed for closure under the post-consultation option, mitigations include maintaining capacity to reschedule groups and activities to a different day and offering out of hours lets. In future, these mitigations could be expanded to include partnerships with other services, meaning the building could remain open on days when the library service is closed.

6.56.3. **Gender Reassignment:** The initial EQIA analysis stated that provided access to any bespoke or targeted provision through groups or was maintained, the impact would be neutral on this characteristic. A review of any such provision was conducted in consideration of the post consultation option and no impact was identified.

6.56.4. **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** No impact identified in the initial EQIA, the updated EQIA, or under the proposed post-consultation option.

6.56.5. **Pregnancy and Maternity:** Maintaining the children's core offer during school hours, between 2-5pm weekly and on Saturdays mitigates any potentially disproportionate impact on this group. Where libraries run targeted groups and activities on days proposed for closure under the post-consultation option, mitigations include maintaining capacity to reschedule groups and activities to a different day and offering out of hours lets. In future, these mitigations could be expanded to include partnerships with

other services, meaning the building could remain open on days when the library service is closed.

6.56.6. **Race:** Protecting hours in the centre and east of the borough, including Sunday opening at Marcus Garvey, alongside maintaining some evening opening hours e.g. until 7pm once weekly at Marcus Garvey and Wood Green, mitigates any potentially disproportionate impact under this protected characteristic. No specific events have been identified in current groups or activities scheduled under the post consultation option that would create a potentially disproportionate impact under this protected characteristic.

6.56.7. **Religion and Belief:** Neutral impact identified, with a seven day opening pattern of the library service across the borough maintained under the post consultation option.

6.56.8. **Sex:** With the potential for women to be disproportionately impacted by a variation in hours, the new proposal maintains library hours across lunchtime, broad coverage across weekday hours, and maintains the children's core offer. No specific events have been identified in current groups or activities scheduled under the post consultation option that would create a potentially disproportionate impact under this protected characteristic. However, it is recognised that female parents and carers frequently attend children's activities and this may give rise to indirect discriminatory impacts. Therefore, where libraries run any targeted groups and activities on days proposed for closure under the post-consultation option, mitigations include maintaining capacity to reschedule groups and activities to a different day and offering out of hours lets. In future, these mitigations could be expanded to include partnerships with other services, meaning the building could remain open on days when the library service is closed.

6.56.9. **Sexual orientation:** The EQIA identified neutral impact under this protected characteristic providing any targeted activities were unaffected by proposals. No potential impact has been identified in this regard under the post consultation proposal.

6.56.10. **Socio Economic:** Under this protected characteristic, mitigations have been made to protect hours in the centre and the east of the borough, as well as maintaining opening hours in the morning and at lunchtimes, all of which are features of the new proposal. Any disproportionate impact that remains is objectively justified in light of the proposal's aims.

## Summary

6.57. The proposed model reflects extensive public feedback and adopts an equity-driven approach to be responsive to areas with the greatest demonstrable need and highest deprivation, while meeting the savings target through a reduction in hours and greater flexibility in staff deployment. Under this new model, we will continue to actively promote library use and our service

offer, ensuring alignment with the Libraries Connected Universal Offers, such as culture & creativity, digital, reading, information, and health & wellbeing initiatives. Each offer will be underpinned by the Vision and Print Impaired People's Promise and the Children's Promise. Efficient resource management and strict adherence to legal obligations remain central to our approach, ensuring we continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service that meets the diverse needs of our community.

6.58. The proposal emphasises the importance of libraries as safe, supportive environments for young people and ensures that services remain inclusive and beneficial to all residents. The increased hours proposed in Option 3 (compared with the consultation options) have been achieved through the restoration of lunchtime opening, re-examination of staff rotas and changes to job roles, and closer proposed working with partners to enable earlier opening for self-service when other services are using the buildings at Marcus Garvey and Wood Green. These are all subject to staff consultation.

6.59. Additionally, the proposed inclusion of a Library Apprenticeship post in the new structure will support continued professionalisation of the service, enable succession planning and demonstrates our council-wide commitment to staff development and 'growing our own' talent. It will allow an enhanced focus on the growth and development of the service, all of which will be systematically set out in the forthcoming co-designed library strategy.

### **Compliance with Statutory Duty**

6.60. The council has a duty under Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof...', with 'persons' defined as 'those whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full-time education within that area.' The duty further requires the council to 'have regard to the desirability of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use.'

6.61. The Act is supplemented by DCMS Guidance, which is not statutory guidance but the council must nonetheless have regard to it. This provides that in providing a comprehensive and efficient library service, the Council must meet the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available.

6.62. The council has carefully considered its statutory duty and the guidance when reviewing the library service operating model and considering the feedback from the consultation, the Needs Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment, as set out in the paragraphs below. The guidance emphasises that the council must:

6.63. *Undertake strategic planning of changes.*

6.63.1. In 2019-20 the council underwent a Libraries Peer Challenge, which recommended that the council invest in library buildings and

infrastructure to make them fit for the future and develop a libraries strategy to set out their future role and purpose. In response the council initiated a major programme of branch library refurbishment with a £5m capital programme and focused on 'getting the basics right' by investing in a new libraries management system and joining The Libraries Consortium. There was also an intention at that time to develop a new strategy. Unfortunately the Covid-19 pandemic and closure of library buildings during lockdown and their subsequent need to recover and adapt to changing patterns of usage has delayed this final step and necessitated a strategic rethinking of where libraries fit in the council's strategic policy agenda. The council's strategic context for libraries is now set by:

6.63.2. **Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26:** under the theme ***A Culturally Rich Borough***, there are two key actions to develop a libraries strategy and complete our capital programme of investment in our library buildings and infrastructure.

6.63.3. **Borough Vision 2035: *Haringey as a place where everyone can belong and thrive*** identifies Thriving Places as one of six calls to action and within that proposes an initial priority around: "Creatively sharing spaces and strengthening networks by utilising available spaces to facilitate community use and strengthening our community networks through providing platforms for information and cultural exchange." We see libraries as a key component of delivering this part of the vision.

6.63.4. The new **Arts and Culture Strategy 2024-28**, setting out our significant and ambitious plans for culture in the future, which proposes two core actions relating to libraries:

- Collaborating with library users, residents and stakeholders to co-design and co-produce a vision and strategy for the long-term future of our libraries
- Amplifying the role of libraries as free, places for learning, engagement and enrichment, by working closely with our Voluntary and Community Sector partners to develop a new Community Hub model

6.63.5. There has been a clear strategic commitment and vision for the service for a number of years. We have sought first to 'get the basics right' by retaining and investing in the core infrastructure (digital systems and buildings) of all our libraries as key community and cultural hubs. Together with the Corporate Delivery Plan, the Borough Vision and the Arts and Culture Strategy, the council has a strong strategic framework for the proposed new libraries strategy and further development of the service. The proposed changes to the library service operating hours do not undermine this strategic framework.

6.64. *Consider a range of options, including alternative financing, governance, or delivery models, to sustain library service provision.*

6.64.1. In previous years the council has proposed alternative models which sought to sustain the library service by developing partnerships with local cultural organisations and venues such as Jacksons Lane Community Centre which was put forward as an alternative host for the

branch library very close to that centre. These proposals were not taken further due to public opposition and concerns about loss of dedicated library provision.

6.64.2. However, the council has a track record of developing successful partnerships with other organisations to sustain and enhance the library offer, including hosting events and activities outside of the current opening hours. This includes for example the very successful programme of Library Lates, developed in partnership with Alexandra Palace, which has seen the libraries open in the evenings for young people to curate and participate in cultural events and activities. The council will seek to build on this experience to ensure that we are maximising the usage of the libraries and enabling children, young people and adults of all ages to 'make full use of' them for a variety of purposes and activities, whether during or outside the formal library service opening hours as proposed in this report.

6.64.3. Two alternative delivery models were considered as a way of making savings: self-service and community-led models. The first of these would involve the introduction of self-service technology and investment in other technologies, such as CCTV. It would mean there would be times where library staff were not present at some libraries. The second of these would involve developing services jointly with the local community, although libraries would remain part of the statutory library network. In essence, it would mean a greater reliance on volunteers rather than council staff to run and staff libraries.

6.64.4. These two options were consulted on as part of the original proposals for the council budget during December 2023 and January 2024 and due to public concerns about the potential impacts of these models in terms of safety and loss of librarians' expertise, they were not progressed any further. Members agreed that they wanted to retain the libraries in public ownership and staffed by Council-employed staff.

6.64.5. The more recent consultation on operating hours has resulted in some suggestions that limited use of volunteers could mitigate the potential difficulties with libraries closing at lunchtime, with volunteers covering the time while library staff take their lunch break. Officers recommend that this is explored further as a supplement to the recommended option of limited lone working while staff take their lunch break, and developed in partnership with Friends groups and others to augment and support staffing resource, rather than replace it as was proposed in the earlier option considered during the budget consultation.

6.64.6. As set out in Section 5 of this report, the Council has also considered making savings elsewhere but given the current financial pressures the Council is facing, and the need for a fair allocation of resources, officers do not consider that the library service can be insulated from the Council's legal obligation to set a balanced budget.

6.65. *Undertake a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of proposals.*

6.65.1. As set out above (paragraphs 7.45 to 7.58) the council has undertaken a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (in Appendix 2) of the implications of the proposal for residents and library users across all protected characteristics. A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken at the outset to inform the initial Options that were consulted upon, and this has been reviewed, expanded upon and re-analysed to incorporate the findings of the consultation. The revised Option 3 being put to Cabinet as a consequence of the consultation has been fully assessed for its equalities impact. Before putting Options 1 and 2 together for public consultation, officers carried out quantitative and qualitative analyses of current library usage patterns and also examined the impact of changes to library services in other boroughs.

6.65.2. Bearing in mind the importance of libraries for digital inclusion, as outlined in Outcome 3 of the Government's 2016-21 [Libraries Deliver Strategy](#), we focused particularly closely on the potential impact of changes to opening hours for those who are digitally excluded. The Needs Assessment analysed quantitative data from the London Office of Technology & Innovation (LOTI) and our own PC and wifi usage data, as well as qualitative data from engagement with library users, and this has told us where and when the libraries are most used – and needed – for their digital provision.

6.65.3. The EqIA findings, alongside feedback from the consultation about the importance of libraries as free, warm, safe public spaces, particularly for those most in need and experiencing most social and economic disadvantage, including digital exclusion, has directly informed the final Option 3 in this report to adopt Equity as the guiding principle for the library service operating hours and retain the longest hours in the most disadvantaged part of the borough. The revised Option 3 would also restore later opening hours in the three main libraries one night a week in response to feedback about the potential impact of earlier closing on young people who may be studying there, on disabled groups who feedback a preference for evening opening, and on working people who may struggle to get to libraries after work.

6.65.4. Haringey's strategic framework for libraries, as set out in the Corporate Delivery Plan, Borough Vision and Arts & Culture Strategy, emphasises the importance of libraries as community and cultural hubs, accessible and welcoming for all, and commits the council to investing in the buildings and infrastructure and developing a strategy to further develop and sustain the service. While the proposals in this report reduce the current opening hours, they do not undermine that strategic commitment which will be taken forward in the coming months.

6.66. *Base proposals on an assessment of needs.*

6.66.1. The council carried out a detailed strategic Needs Assessment which informed the development of the original Options 1 and 2 put to

consultation. As with the EqIA, the Needs Assessment has been updated so that the final proposal is informed by the latest data available. For example, due to the recent refurbishments of a number of the branch libraries and their consequent recent reopening with new footfall counters, there was limited usage data available for some libraries when the original proposals were put together. More footfall and occupancy data is now available and this has been included in the updated Needs Assessment in Appendix 1 and used to inform the revised opening hours put forward in Option 3, as set out above.

6.66.2. The council has adopted the Haringey Deal which commits us to basing everything we do on a firm foundation of knowing our communities. We have a detailed State of the Borough profile supported by ward profiles and have worked hard over recent years to improve our knowledge and understanding of the needs and strengths of our lesser-known and newer communities. This understanding has informed the development of the Needs Assessment and the final proposals set out in Option 3.

6.66.3. Haringey as a borough is constantly changing as we welcome new communities, and as resources grow tighter we are even more aware of the importance of understanding those changing needs. This enables the council to ensure its limited resources are used in the best possible way to meet those needs alongside its strategic and corporate objectives to build a fairer, greener Haringey and be a place where everyone can belong and thrive. Adoption of the equity principle as the guiding principle behind the model proposed in Option 3 enables us to match our resources most closely to where there is demonstrated need.

6.67. In considering whether the council will still be providing a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service and encouraging children and adults to 'make full use' of it as required by S7 of the 1964 Act, should the proposed Option 3 be agreed, it is important to recognise the services which continue to be offered by the library service and which will not be affected by these changes.

6.68. In particular it is clear that borrowing of e-books and audio-books has dramatically increased in recent years, notably since the pandemic and lockdown and with a further sharp increase following the installation of the new library online system in summer 2023. From around 500 digital items issued per month in April 2019 there were 6,200 digital items issued in September 2024. Digital stock, borrowed by users from the comfort of their own home at whatever time of day they choose to do so, is currently the third most borrowed stock after physical issues from Hornsey and Wood Green libraries. This service will continue to be increasingly important and the council will continue to develop and promote the availability of online stock as part of a comprehensive service.

6.69. In addition, the council operates a Home Library Service for housebound and frail residents and others who cannot visit libraries in person. It provides monthly visits, offering access to the libraries' wide range of stock including

The Libraries Consortium materials and a bespoke catalogue of CDs, DVDs, audiobooks and board games. The service also extends to care homes and nurseries, enhancing library access for many adults and children. Additionally, it administers BookStart deliveries to both health and children's centres, promoting early literacy and supporting our work under the statutory duty to consider how we are encouraging children to make full use of the library service. As of October 2024, the service supports 136 individuals and 48 community groups across the borough.

- 6.70. An important component of offering a comprehensive service is accessibility. In designing the revised opening hours that are being proposed, the nine Haringey libraries have been grouped into three groups, each with a main library and two branches. The days and times when each library is proposed to be open and closed have been developed not only to respond to current usage, need and feedback through the consultation, but also to ensure that if your nearest library is closed, another one in that group will be open, minimising the need for extensive travel across the borough.
- 6.71. In response to early feedback from engagement with Friends of Libraries Groups, who highlighted that geographical location was sometimes less relevant than bus and other transport routes when choosing alternative libraries to visit, the groupings have been designed in relation to public transport routes. Within these groupings, if a resident has gone to their local library only to find it closed, they will never normally need to travel more than half an hour by public transport to get to an alternative library, and often it will be much less.
- 6.72. Haringey has invested significantly in improving the physical accessibility of its libraries, with a £5m branch library refurbishment programme which is nearly complete. Alongside other improvements, this has installed lifts in four libraries that needed them so that they will all be accessible and fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act once the programme is concluded next year. Ensuring that disabled residents are able to access all the borough's libraries is an important element of offering a comprehensive service.
- 6.73. As well as being comprehensive, the 1964 Act requires local authority library services to be efficient, taking into account the resources available. Haringey objectively already runs an efficient library service: benchmarking shows that our cultural services unit costs overall are 5.2% lower than our nearest neighbours and 27% lower than the national average. In addition, Camden & Lewisham, which have already put in place alternative delivery models and have transferred branch libraries to being run by local VCS groups and volunteers, nonetheless have higher unit costs for cultural services than Haringey. It should be noted that this cluster of services includes wider cultural service provision as well as libraries and so exact comparisons are difficult. These proposals will ensure that Haringey's service remains efficient, recognising that many other councils are also making similar budget reductions across their services and so their unit costs are likely to reduce as well.



- 6.74. Haringey has already taken significant steps to improve the efficiency of the service, particularly in the context of more than a decade of austerity which has progressively reduced local government budgets. Back office and management restructures have reduced expenditure without impacting on the service received by library users, for example integrating the management of the Home Library Service into the wider service in 2023.
- 6.75. Some years ago the council also took the decision to replace its out of date library stock management system with a new system, procured by joining The Libraries Consortium, a multi-borough partnership of library authorities. This generated £60k savings and has also enabled Haringey residents to access a much wider selection of stock, up to 8 million titles, enabling a further small saving from the council's internal stock budget. This investment has also enabled us to provide more advice and information about how residents can use the library service, with improved booking systems, an upgraded website and growing social media presence to promote the many activities and services available in the libraries. At nearly 4.5k followers, our presence on X formerly Twitter is considerably greater than many of our neighbouring library services, supporting our compliance with that section of the statutory duty.
- 6.76. Making use of the investment in the library buildings and the improved online booking system, the council has begun to generate more income from letting out spaces in the libraries, gradually recovering from the reduction during the years of the pandemic and lockdown. For example, there is an artist in residence in one of the main libraries, renting space as a studio and contributing to exhibitions, and the council has also rented space to Barclay's Bank to provide a banking service in one of the branch libraries after the local bank branch closed down. The council accepts the consultation feedback that we can do more to bring in external funding and partnerships and intends to work towards seeking National Portfolio Organisation status for the service as part of its ambitions for London Borough of Culture in 2027. Income generation will form a major part of the new libraries strategy.
- 6.77. The 1964 Act duty also requires that the library service is maintained 'for all persons desiring to make use thereof'. Haringey has maintained the same number of libraries and a relatively high level of opening hours for over a decade and has therefore seen library usage fall by considerably less than both national and London comparators: by 35% in Haringey between 2010/11 and 2019/20, compared with a 46% decline in London. Nevertheless this equates to a continuous and significant fall in the number of persons desiring to make use of the library service over time, from a high of over two million visitors recorded in 2011/12 down to around 900,000 in 2023/24, post-pandemic.
- 6.78. The updated footfall and occupancy data contained within the Needs Assessment enables the council to propose reductions in opening hours aligned with when there are fewest people seeking to make use of the libraries, broadly during the first and last hours of the current opening times. This supports the delivery of an efficient library service.

6.79. Finally in relation to compliance with the statutory duty, the council has engaged with officials at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) throughout this process, as the Secretary of State has the duty to superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England. Officers have shared emerging proposals and the consultation documents with the Department and met with them in October to provide an update on the outcome of the consultation. The council has followed DCMS advice in relation to good practice and the government's statutory guidance, and officials have kindly reviewed and commented on the proposals in this report.

## **Staffing Implications**

6.80. Library staff are at the heart of public service, bridging the library and community through their expertise. Library users value the ability of library staff to connect them with essential resources, provide support for lifelong learning, and create welcoming, inclusive spaces. Library users see them as champions of literacy, and trusted advisors, who understand their needs, and as guides who offer tailored assistance, along with enriching programmes and activities.

6.81. The current library staff group is comprised of a total headcount of 71, of which 35 are full-time and 36 are part-time. This headcount does not include vacant posts, of which there are currently around 12 FTE, which will assist in mitigating the impact of potential redundancies.

6.82. Haringey library staff are a dedicated and experienced team, with 58% having served in Haringey for more than 10 years, and 37% for over 20 years, reflecting a stable and deeply committed workforce. Among them, three staff members hold formal library qualifications, specialising in areas such as stock procurement and reader development, while many others bring essential transferable skills from other qualifications. This expertise is paired with a strong commitment to serving the community, demonstrated by their active participation in local events and initiatives. For example, the staff organise weekly events for children under 5, which support early language acquisition, social development, and school readiness. They also run reading challenges for children aged 4 to 14, promoting reading for pleasure and building lifelong literacy skills.

6.83. Additionally, staff contributions to annual community events, such as Black History Month, Women's History Month and LGBTQI+ Month, or to half term music technology projects for young people, further enhance the libraries' role as a dynamic and inclusive space. This combination of long-serving experience, specialised roles, academic qualifications, and active engagement makes the library staff an invaluable asset, enriching both the library and the broader community they serve.

6.84. Engagement with staff and Trade Unions has been ongoing, fostering open dialogue and collaboration. Regular meetings, such as the library staff forum, have provided opportunities for staff to share insights, whilst regular meetings with the Trade Union have given them the opportunity to represent member

concerns. This engagement has been valuable in aligning the proposals for library services with both operational goals and workforce wellbeing.

- 6.85. Initial staff feedback on the public consultation on opening hours has emphasised the importance of maintaining fair working conditions, ensuring sufficient staffing levels, and considering staff input in decision-making processes which the staff are aware will be pivotal in the staff consultation element.
- 6.86. Should the Cabinet give in-principle agreement to the proposed Option 3, a formal staff consultation on the proposed changes to the service model will take place, the outcomes of which will inform any final decision on the service model.

### **Libraries Strategy and next steps**

- 6.87. Haringey's Constitution contains an historic requirement to publish an annual Libraries Plan. This is out of date as the legal requirement to do so was abolished some years ago, and the council is currently updating its Constitution through a Constitutional Working Group to remove out of date references. However, the council does intend to commence the development a new Libraries Strategy in early 2025, building on its longstanding strategic commitment to maintaining and improving the library service through capital investment and in the context of its ambitious plans for a Culturally Rich Borough as set out in the Corporate Development Plan, Borough Vision and new Arts & Culture Strategy.
- 6.88. While this consultation and review of library operating hours has been focused on the best and fairest way to continue to deliver the service within the reduced financial envelope, we continue to be ambitious for our libraries service into the future. Many of the comments from this consultation suggested alternative or additional ways of saving money or generating income in the libraries service and we will take these into account in developing the wider strategy.
- 6.89. Responses to the consultation have underlined the essential value of libraries to our residents as safe, warm, quiet, free to access, welcoming indoor spaces, that are available to all our communities. They are valued as places of knowledge and learning, but also as vibrant community hubs where users can find access to different kinds of information and supportive staff. People can participate in a range of groups and clubs, from baby groups, Bible study groups, reading groups, writing groups, coffee mornings, concerts, film screenings, craft classes, family singing sessions, and many more activities.
- 6.90. Children's activities are amongst some of the best attended activities. For students, our libraries are important spaces for study and revision and the new strategy will explore how we can enhance this offer, for example looking at how we could sustain longer opening hours during public examination revision periods in May and June. For older adults, libraries are also important places to socialise and have conversations. The use of free Wi-Fi and PC

access is of importance to residents who would not otherwise have sufficient online access at home.

6.91. The development of our library strategy will seek to build on the feedback we have received, as well as consider the unmet potential in our libraries, the range of activities that are on offer, and the appetite for users to engage in planning and curating community events. We will work closely with our library users in the development of our future plans and strategy, taking into account the essential principles of equity and need, and recognising opportunities for improvements and expansions to our library offer.

6.92. In addition to the consultation feedback, it is worth noting that the Needs Assessment, in particular the footfall and occupancy data, highlights very low usage of some of Haringey's smaller libraries at particular days and times of the week. At times, there are likely to be more staff than library users in the buildings, which cannot be a good use of public resources and undermines our statutory duty to provide an efficient service. Across all our libraries, main and branch, as noted earlier in the report, usage has fallen over the last decade or more, albeit digital stock and other facilities usage has grown significantly over the same period. The Needs Assessment also identifies that our current library users do not consistently match the demographics of the whole borough.

6.93. The development of a new Strategy represents a major opportunity to reverse this decline in usage and create a new vision for the service that will attract more and different people into the libraries, for a range of purposes in addition to reading and borrowing books. The consultation, Needs Assessment and EQIA all tell us that there is need and desire for the widest range of services that libraries can provide, including but not limited to book borrowing, and we have invested in our buildings so that they are ready to do so. Failure to develop the ideas and ways in which our libraries are used to a much greater extent than some of them are now, and to attract a new generation of library users into these spaces would represent a major missed opportunity for Haringey. It is incumbent on all who care about libraries to seize this opportunity and be ready to help them change, develop and grow. The council is committed to enabling this to happen over the coming months and years.

6.94. Building on the council's strategic framework for the library service, and on the commitments in the Haringey Deal, the Corporate Delivery Plan, the Borough Vision and the Arts and Culture Strategy, the council will be taking forward a new Strategy. The Strategy will be informed by the findings of the detailed Needs Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and the consultation with residents and staff undertaken as part of the proposals outlined in this report, together with earlier engagement exercises such as Wood Green and Tottenham Voices and the 2024/25 Budget Consultation.

6.95. The Strategy will be guided by the principles as laid down in the Arts & Culture strategy:

6.95.1. **Access:** Striving for better access, so that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from, enjoy and participate in arts & culture.

6.95.2. **Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration, especially where it leads to enhanced cultural provision, better infrastructure, increased transparency, and better access to information for our creative and cultural communities.

6.95.3. **Equity:** Supporting increased equity, by valuing, respecting, celebrating, taking pride in, and learning from our rich heritage, diverse culture, and histories.

6.95.4. **Growth:** Promoting growth and autonomy for our residents and local businesses so that they can achieve their potential.

6.95.5. **Life-Long Learning:** Ensuring that our children and young people can fully participate in rich and sustained cultural learning, and benefit from the transformative power of arts & culture throughout their lives.

6.95.6. **Visibility & Representation:** All of our communities should be able to see themselves represented in Haringey's cultural and creative offer and be actively involved in decision-making.

6.96. The Strategy will be subject to further engagement with local groups and communities, to ensure that we continue to collaborate with residents and stakeholders, that we understand the needs and diversity of our borough, and that our vision for the library service maximises outcomes for our residents whilst being financially sustainable.

6.97. It is envisaged that this work will commence in early spring 2025. The council recognises that the process we have just undertaken to review the operating hours of the library service has been difficult. In particular we acknowledge and understand the concerns expressed by Haringey's Friends of Libraries groups, who are very dedicated and committed to their local libraries. We hope that the process of developing the Strategy can be a more positive one as we seize the opportunity referenced above. The council is committed to rebuilding relationships with the Friends and with all groups and communities who can benefit from Haringey's library service in the years to come.

## **7. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High level Strategic outcomes'?**

7.1. The libraries service features in the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26 under the theme *A Culturally Rich Borough*. There are two key actions: to develop a libraries strategy and deliver our capital programme of investment in our library buildings and infrastructure.

7.2. Although this report is focused on a proposed revision of operating hours for libraries, the Needs Assessment, consultation and engagement carried out to inform these proposals provide a foundation for the development of the

libraries strategy, which is planned to begin in the next quarter of the municipal year.

7.3. The capital investment programme has improved the accessibility, energy efficiency, attractiveness and flexibility of the library buildings, enabling them to be used by more people and groups, with the aim of increasing access and footfall and generating income. This contributes to the maintenance of a comprehensive and efficient library service, as well as to the achievement of the Corporate Delivery Plan objective of building a fairer, greener borough.

## **8. Carbon and Climate Change**

8.1. The proposals contained within this report have no implications for carbon reduction and climate change.

## **9. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)**

### **9.1. Finance**

9.1.1. The review of Library opening hours and associated £675k saving formed part of the Final 2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

9.1.2. The revised Option 3 set out in this report which delivers a 25.9% reduction in opening hours would, along with the associated staff cost savings, substantially meet this budget saving.

9.1.3. Paragraph 6.79 refers to potential staff redundancies. Due to the high level of vacancies this is expected to be relatively limited however final costs will not be known until the conclusion of the staff consultation. Any redundancy costs will be met by the Service in line with the current organisational change policy.

### **9.2. Procurement**

9.2.1. Strategic Procurement note the contents of this report and confirm there are no procurement related matters preventing Cabinet approving the Recommendations stated in paragraph 3 above.

### **9.3. Head of Legal & Governance**

9.3.1. The Assistant Director of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.3.2. In accordance with section 7(1) Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 the Council is required to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service” for all those who live, work or study in Haringey. A comprehensive service requires delivering a service that is accessible to all residents using

reasonable means, including digital technologies, where distances and time taken to reach a library must be reasonable and particular problems, whether physical disabilities, or created by age and family considerations, must be capable of being met. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources.<sup>2</sup>

9.3.3. Guidance has been issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on local authorities' duties under s. 7 of the 1964 Act. This is not statutory guidance but the Council must as a matter of public law have regard to it, and may be under a duty not to depart from it unless there is "*good reason*" (*R (Ali) v Newham LBC* [2012] EWHC 2970 (Admin)). In broad outline, the guidance emphasises the need to:

9.3.3.1. Undertake strategic planning of changes;

9.3.3.2. Consider a range of options, including alternative financing, governance, or delivery models, to sustain library service provision;

9.3.3.3. Undertake a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of proposals; and

9.3.3.4. Base proposals on an assessment of needs.

9.3.4. Library services differ across local authorities. It is noted that officers have been in discussion with DCMS regarding the proposals set out in this report. It is also noted that officers are preparing a library strategy, to be brought back to members for approval in due course. This strategy will be guided by the principles of the Council's Arts and Culture Strategy, and be informed by the findings of the detailed Needs Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and the consultation with residents and staff undertaken as part of the proposals outlined in this report. Further engagement with residents will also be undertaken.

9.3.5. It should be noted that Cabinet are asked to make an in-principle decision only at this stage. The proposal will then be subject to formal consultation with affected staff, following which a final decision of the library service will be brought back to the Lead Member or Cabinet as appropriate.

9.3.6. It is noted in the report that the Council's Constitution contains an historic reference to a requirement for an Annual Library plan. This is no longer required, though the Council has opted to have a library strategy.

9.3.7. Between August and October 2024 a public consultation was carried out on two proposed options for reducing the overall library hours – although

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<sup>2</sup> *Draper v Lincolnshire County Council* [2014]

there is no statutory duty to consult, the DCMS guidance on 'Libraries as a statutory service' envisages that consultation will take place prior to changes being made to library services. The consultation ran for six weeks pursuant to which the Council prepared a detailed consultation report (Appendix 4) setting out the findings. The total number of consultation responses received and considered was 1376. Having considered the consultation feedback provided, the Council developed Option 3, which is the revised option officers recommend should be agreed in principle (subject to staff consultation).

9.3.8. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

9.3.9 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

9.3.10 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken (Appendix 2) to identify any areas that the service review that will have an impact on a protect group. The EQIA was undertaken in two phases namely (i) prior to consultation taking place so as to inform the two proposals in respect of which consultation was undertaken and (ii) after the public consultation exercise had been undertaken, in order to ensure that the consultation feedback fed into the Council's considerations relating to the PSED and its proposal to reduce library hours.

9.3.11 The EQIA has identified that a number of negative impacts that would disproportionately affect persons with protected characteristics. Accordingly, prior to consultation the two options were developed as to mitigate any such potential negative impacts. Further, after public consultation, option 3 was developed to further mitigate the negative impact of the reduced hours on persons with protected characteristics. Any disproportionate impacts that remain are objectively justified in light of the proposal's aims.



## 9.4 Equality

9.4.1 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

9.4.2 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status apply to the first part of the duty. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

9.4.3 This report presents the findings of the recent consultation on two options to vary library operating hours alongside a detailed Needs Assessment and full Equalities Impact Assessment, both of which were produced to inform the two original options and have been updated following the consultation. Cabinet is recommended to agree in principle to a revised option 3, subject to staff consultation, prior to implementation.

9.4.4 Consideration has been given throughout this process of the potential impact of the proposals set out in this report on groups with both high needs and protected characteristics under the Equalities Act. The original Equalities Impact Assessment identified the importance of library provision for residents with protected characteristics and facing socio-economic disadvantage and advised that the final decisions would need to give consideration to the following in order to mitigate potential negative impacts on certain groups:

- Younger people's particular need for libraries after 3 pm  
**Mitigation:** All libraries to be open until 6pm on the weekdays that they are open, plus additional late night opening three nights a week at the main libraries.
- Libraries being closed in a way that allows co-located services to still be opened.  
**Mitigation:** agreement with co-located services about opening buildings earlier than the libraries are proposed to open to enable self-service access and co-located services to operate.
- Disabled people and older people's possible inability to travel to their next nearest library.

**Mitigation:** operational clusters and planned opening patterns to mean that if your nearest library is closed there will be another one open less than half an hour away by public transport

- Avoiding significantly long (e.g. multiday consecutive) closures of smaller libraries to ensure this does not compound the effects of social isolation on certain groups.

**Mitigation:** no multiday consecutive closures of smaller libraries

- Library closures not disproportionately impacting the Charedi Jewish community who cannot access them on Saturdays.

**Mitigation:** initial engagement with the community suggests they are more comfortable using Stamford Hill library in Hackney which is open on Sundays; further work to be done through the libraries strategy development on increasing this community's access to and use of Haringey libraries.

- Libraries requiring longer opening times in winter to provide a warm space for at risk people.

**No immediate mitigation** identified as seasonal variations are not currently operationally possible within the resources available. However, work has commenced internally to identify other services who may be able to offer outreach and activities in libraries during their closed hours at different times in the year. This will be developed further as part of the libraries strategy.

- Libraries having a broad range of opening hours to cater to differing working patterns of men and women.

**Mitigation:** All branch libraries to be open 9.30am - 6pm on the weekdays that they are open, plus additional late night opening three nights a week at the main libraries

- If classes and sessions need to be moved due to reduced opening hours extensive thought must be given to find an appropriate new time and/or date that is relevant to the group the session serves.

**Mitigation:** analysis of affected classes and sessions as a result of the proposed Option 3's opening hours is underway and alternative slots to be sought.

- For residents who rely on frequent and consistent use of libraries for digital access ensuring changes to hours do not lead to significant increases in digital exclusion. Furthermore that changes to hours align with when residents who require digital access are most likely to use libraries.

**Mitigation:** The equity principle on which Option 3 is based would protect longer opening hours at those libraries where proportionately more use is made of their digital resources (PCs and free wifi). All libraries to be open until 6pm on the weekdays that they are open, plus additional late night opening three nights a week at the main libraries, which all have a large digital offer.

9.4.5 The updated EqIA has identified the potential impacts of the original proposals on these groups and suggested ways to mitigate these impacts, as summarised below:

**Age:**

- **Consider maintaining some evening hours:** This is important to avoid disproportionately impacting people aged under 25 who are disproportionately reliant on library evening hours for access to suitable study spaces.
- **Remain open during lunchtimes:** Especially on Saturdays, as it is a peak time for most age groups.
- **Consider age-specific preferences:** In the responses, younger and working-age groups favour afternoon and evening hours, while older groups prefer late mornings and early afternoons.

**Mitigation:** All libraries to be open until 6pm on the weekdays that they are open, plus additional late night opening one night a week at each of the main libraries. Lunchtime openings to be restored.

**Ethnicity:**

- **Protecting hours in the centre and east of the borough**
- **Maintaining some evening hours:** This would avoid potentially disproportionately impacting those ethnic groups other than the "White" cohort who were identified by the consultation as preferring to visit libraries later in the day.

**Mitigation:** Sunday opening at Marcus Garvey, alongside maintaining some evening opening hours e.g. until 7pm once weekly at Marcus Garvey and Wood Green. All libraries to be open until 6pm on the weekdays that they are open.

**Disability:**

- **Maintaining some evening hours:** This is a more frequent usage time for disabled individuals compared to 9-11 am.

**Mitigation:** All libraries to be open until 6pm on the weekdays that they are open, plus additional late night opening one night a week at each of the main libraries.

**Pregnancy / maternity:**

- **Preserve daytime and weekend access:** This would avoid disproportionately impacting parents and carers of under 5s.
- **Consider maintaining some evening hours:** Particularly Monday-Wednesday as parents/carers of SEND children were identified by the consultation as using these days the most for evening access to the libraries.

**Mitigation:** All libraries to be open until 6pm on the weekdays that they are open, plus additional late night opening one night a week at each of the main libraries. Lunchtime openings to be restored. All libraries to be open 10am – 5pm on Saturdays.

**Sex:**

- **Preserve daytime and weekend access:** to avoid disproportionately impacting women.
- **Mitigation:** library hours maintained across lunchtime, broad coverage across weekday hours, and the children's core offer. Maintaining capacity to reschedule groups and activities to a different day where necessary, and offering out of hours lets.

**Socioeconomic Status:**

- **Protecting hours in the centre and east of the borough**
- **Maintain morning opening (9-11 am):** This group is most likely to use libraries in the mornings.
- **Remain open during lunchtimes:** This better accommodates this group's usage patterns.

**Mitigation:** Library hours in the centre and the east of the borough protected, as well as maintaining opening hours in the morning and at lunchtimes. All branch libraries to be open until 9.30am - 6pm on the weekdays that they are open and an additional self-service hour to be explored 9am – 10am at Marcus Garvey and Wood Green. Lunchtime openings to be restored.

**Other Recommendations:**

- **Give full consideration to existing targeted provision:** Pay attention to how changes might affect activities programmed for specific groups within the community, including external lets.

**Mitigation:** analysis of affected classes and sessions as a result of the proposed Option 3's opening hours is underway and alternative slots to be sought.

9.4.6 In summary, careful consideration has been given to the potential negative impacts of the proposed changes and revised Option 3 recommends a number of changes to the original proposals to mitigate potential impacts on groups with protected characteristics. In particular, adjustments have been recommended specifically in order to mitigate equality impacts relating to evening and after-school opening hours (relevant to age, ethnicity, disability, and pregnancy/maternity), lunchtime opening (age and socioeconomic status), and morning opening (socioeconomic status). This is summarised above and set out in more detail in section 6 of this report: Changes proposed to original proposals: revised Option 3.

## **10 Use of Appendices**

*Appendix 1: Libraries Needs Assessment*

*Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment*

*Appendix 3: Libraries Consultation Document*

*Appendix 4: Libraries Consultation Report*

## **11 Background papers**

*None*