

Report for: Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting - 6 January 2025

Title: Call-In of a decision taken at Cabinet on 10 December 2024 on Libraries Operating Hours

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

Lead Officer: Kenneth Tharp, Assistant Director Culture & Creativity

Ward(s) affected: All

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

1. Describe the issue under consideration.

- 1.1 On 10 December 2024, Cabinet agreed the following recommendations in a report presented to them:
- 1.1.1. 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.
 - 1.1.2. 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.
 - 1.1.3. 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.
 - 1.1.4. 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.
 - 1.1.5. 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.

- 1.1.6. 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.
- 1.2 Following a Call-In of that decision made in accordance with Council procedures, this report provides further information to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (OSC) consideration of the issues raised in the Call-In.
- 2. Cabinet Member Introduction**
- 2.1 My introduction to the original report considered by Cabinet on 10 December 2024 set out the case for that decision.
- 2.2 We are extremely proud and supportive of the nine libraries in Haringey. Unlike many other local authorities up and down the country, who have been in the unenviable situation of closing libraries, 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 have closed without replacement: none of these have been in Haringey.
- 2.3 The huge and ongoing financial pressures facing us, particularly from rising social care and housing costs means that the library service, like many other departments and services across the council have had to drive efficiencies and effective resource management. We have some of the longest library opening hours in London but these are unsustainable, especially when some libraries have low footfall and occupancy rates. As a responsible council, we are delivering our statutory responsibilities.
- 2.4 The proposals I presented on 10th December aimed to make changes to the library service and our assets in the fairest way possible, prioritising residents who need public services most, protecting our least well-off communities and with equity as the guiding principle for the way we make these changes. The decision taken by the Cabinet on the 10th December aligns library service provision with current legislation and puts consideration of available resources and local needs at the centre of this. Although library opening hours will be reduced, this is based on a detailed needs assessment and consultation.
- 2.5 A public consultation was held from August to October, where residents and community groups were invited to share their views on the proposed changes and 1376 responses were received. We have also carried out engagement meetings with individual Friends of Libraries groups, the Friends of Reading and Education group and reached out to schools, colleges and pensioners groups. Their feedback has informed the decision made by the Cabinet on the 10th December. We followed proper consultation processes, engaging with

stakeholders and incorporating feedback. We have carefully considered the needs of residents across Haringey, individual library footfall and occupancy data, along with equity-based service delivery, ensuring that the decision is in line with guidance from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with whom we have engaged and updated throughout the process. We have followed statutory guidelines and the decision made by Cabinet on the 10th December was well-informed, reasonable and not predetermined.

- 2.6 The Council is currently updating its Constitution to remove outdated references, including those related to the Local Government Act 2000 and its associated regulations. These regulations previously required the submission of an Annual Library Plan, a requirement that no longer exists, as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport confirmed the withdrawal of this process in 2003.
- 2.7 We are committed to ensuring libraries remain sustainable in the future and to preserving these valuable community assets. We have committed to developing a new strategy to continue modernising the service, exploring new ways to generate income and adapting to changing community needs. We will specifically focus on engaging the younger generation and responding to the post-pandemic landscape where library usage has changed and evolved.
- 2.8 This has been a careful balancing act which has required compromises – but we are committed to protecting library services as much as possible by responding to the financial reality we are collectively living through and listening to community input we will ensure libraries remain accessible and sustainable for residents in Haringey.
- 2.9 I want to reassure our residents that we have taken our role as elected decision makers extremely seriously. This report deals with the specific points raised by the Call-In. I confirm my view that nothing raised in the Call-In or set out in this report changes my view that the decision taken on the 10 December is the correct one and should be upheld.

3. Recommendations.

- 3.1 On the basis of the information provided in the Cabinet report of 10 December and in this report, it is recommended that the Committee reject this Call-In and take no further action.

4. Reasons for decision.

- 4.1 N/a

5. Alternative options considered.

- 5.1 N/a

6. The Decision and the Call-In

- 6.1 On 10 December 2024, Cabinet approved the recommendations set out in the report entitled 'Review of Libraries Operating Hours'. The decision and the report are available on the Council's website and a corresponding weblink is provided in Section 19: background papers.
- 6.2 Following the issuing of the draft minutes for the Cabinet meeting, a Call-In of that decision was received and validated, in line with agreed Council procedures. Accordingly, the matter is now to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Sections 7-14 of this report describe and respond to each of the reasons given for the Call-In.

7. Call-in point 1: The Council's Constitution requires an Annual Library Plan to be approved by Full Council. Though this provision is out of date in that an Annual Library Plan is no longer required by central government; it nevertheless remains a part of Haringey's Constitution. No Annual Library Plan has been approved, arguably meaning any decision taken on libraries is being taken outside the policy framework.

- 7.1. As outlined in the Cabinet report, the council is currently updating its Constitution through a Constitutional Working Group to remove out of date references, of which this is one. This reference stems from The Local Government Act 2000, which, together with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, as amended ('2000 Regulations'), identify which functions are to be treated as executive functions and non-executive functions. Regulation 4 and Schedule 3 to the Regulations set out functions which are not to be the sole responsibility of the executive and are treated as the joint responsibility of Cabinet and Council. These are referenced in the Council's Constitution as the 'Policy Framework' which is a list of plans and strategies which are required to be decided by Full Council, usually on the recommendation of the Cabinet. The Policy Framework should be updated to reflect changes in legislation and guidance issued by the Secretary of State, which is what the Constitutional Working Group is currently working through.
- 7.2. The 2000 Regulations themselves have not been updated and still include reference to 'Annual Library Plan - Section 1(2) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964'. However, section 1(2) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 does not specifically mention the requirement to produce an Annual Library Plan and instead states "Every library authority shall furnish such information and provide such facilities for the inspection of library premises, stocks and records, as the Secretary of State may require for carrying out his duty under this section."
- 7.3. Communications have taken place with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport ('DCMS') throughout the development of the proposals approved by Cabinet in December to comply with the actual requirement under section 1(2) of the Act. DCMS officials confirm that Annual Library Plans were first introduced in 1998 and Public Library Standards were implemented in 2001. They were intended to provide a focus for library managers to gather information and manage library services. At that time local authorities were

required to submit an annual library plan to DCMS by the end of September each year. In February 2003, DCMS published "Framework for the Future" setting out the comprehensive performance assessment process instead of requiring an Annual Library Plan from each library authority. This was then replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment, itself abolished by the Coalition Government after 2010, and the Public Library Standards have been withdrawn. There is no longer a requirement from DCMS that an Annual Library Plan be submitted to the Department for approval or otherwise and the expectation is that planning the delivery of library services is best decided at a local level.

7.4. In providing information to DCMS, officers consider that they have complied with the statutory duty under the Act and that it would be unreasonable for an out-of-date reference in the Constitution to an out-of-date and inaccurate provision in Regulations to be used to reverse a legitimate decision of Cabinet, therefore this point of the call-in is rejected.

8. Call-in point 2: In absence of an Annual Library Plan, there are a number of metrics outlined for improvements involving libraries within the Corporate Delivery Plan, including: the number of internet accesses in libraries; increasing opportunities to showcase local creativity and heritage in libraries; and widening the use of libraries; all of which are put at risk by the decision to shorten opening hours.

8.1. Actions for the library service feature 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. The Needs Assessment, consultation and engagement carried out to inform the proposal approved by Cabinet in December provide a foundation for the development of the libraries strategy, which is planned to begin in the next quarter of the municipal year, and which is intended to enable the above metrics to be met.

8.2. 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 widening the use of the libraries and increasing opportunities to showcase local creativity and heritage in libraries. A number of these activities are already being delivered outside of library opening hours and can continue to do so, even under the proposed shorter opening hours. For example, the Library Lates Afro Heritage Night which took place at Wood Green Library on 8 November 2024 from 1900-2300 as part of the wider programme of Library Lates, and a series of evening and weekend events at Hornsey Library as part of the Crouch End Festival in June 2024, all of which took place after normal opening hours and will continue to be possible under the reduced opening hours.

8.3. The Council will always have to determine how best to deliver all its corporate priorities within the resources available, and after a decade and a half of austerity officers are well-used to seeking to deliver against agreed metrics within the context of ever-reducing resources. DCMS Guidance states that:

“Councillors need to make decisions about how money is invested in the interests of the whole community. They will have competing priorities across a wide portfolio of local service provision and councillors and officers must reconcile these matters against the background of their legal requirements. Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.” The Council will continue to seek to deliver against the above metrics despite the reduced resources and opening hours and its existing track record of being able to do so out of hours demonstrates that the metrics are not particularly at risk through the change to opening hours, therefore this point of the call-in is rejected.

9. Call-in point 3: DCMS Guidance recommends that councils wishing to reduce library hours must ‘undertake strategic planning of changes’, but Haringey is proposing to make this major policy change without either the constitutionally mandated Annual Library Plan or a Library Strategy of any variety in-place.

- 9.1. The DCMS Guidance referenced in the call-in is not statutory guidance but the Council must nonetheless have regard to it. This requirement was met through sections 6.60 to 6.79 of the Cabinet report which considered all four sections of the Guidance and the wider aspects of the statutory duty in detail. The Guidance states 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. This demonstrates that it is reasonable for the Council to determine and vary the library service offer within the resources available to it, so long as this is based on an assessment of the needs of library users.
- 9.2. In addition, as the Cabinet report set out, the Council has had a clear strategic framework and vision for the service for a number of years. We 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, this investment means that the council has a strong foundation 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 and direction of travel.
- 9.3. As referenced in the Cabinet report and above, consultation and engagement with DCMS officials has taken place throughout this process. They confirm that ideally a specific libraries strategy would already be in place, but that not having one does not on its own bring into question whether the Council is meeting its statutory duty. Officials have also emphasised the importance of the council having in place clear strategic considerations of local user needs, drawing upon evidence and resulting in a clear outline of what the library service should achieve and deliver. Precisely how that is achieved is for the council to determine, and the proposals approved by Cabinet followed an extremely detailed needs assessment which was carried out to inform the public consultation and development of the options under consideration.

9.4. DCMS are aware of the Council's intentions to develop and to have in place a libraries strategy by the middle of 2025. The Council does therefore have a strategic plan for the library service, which the proposals on opening hours do not undermine, but take into account the reduced resources available to the Council, in common with many councils suffering the cumulative effects of 15 years of austerity. This point of the call-in is therefore rejected.

10. Call-in point 4: The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act requires that library services are maintained 'for all persons desiring to make use thereof', yet the cuts being implemented fall disproportionately on the most used libraries in the borough, i.e. those libraries with most 'persons desiring to make use'.

10.1. The proposal approved by Cabinet in December took account of this requirement through the detailed analysis of footfall and occupancy data which informed the proposed hours. In particular, the council put forward reductions in opening hours aligned with when there are fewest people seeking to make use of the libraries, during the first and last hours of the current opening times which was broadly the same pattern across all libraries.

10.2. It is incorrect to say that "the cuts fall disproportionately on the most used

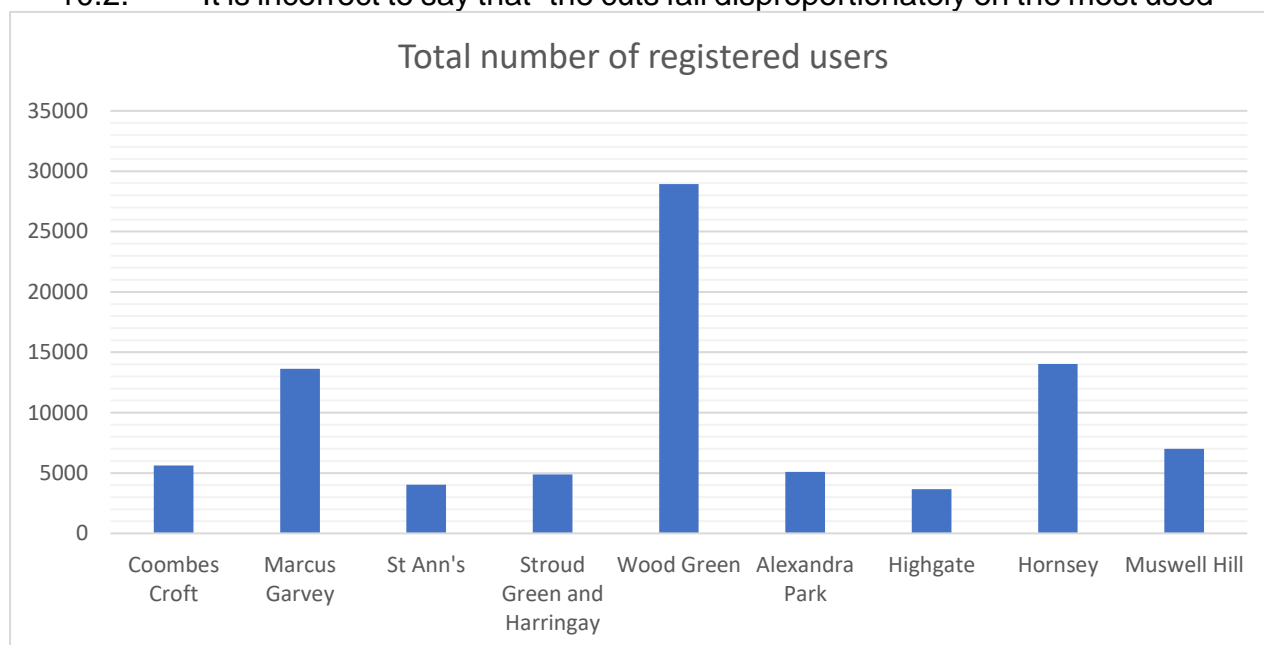
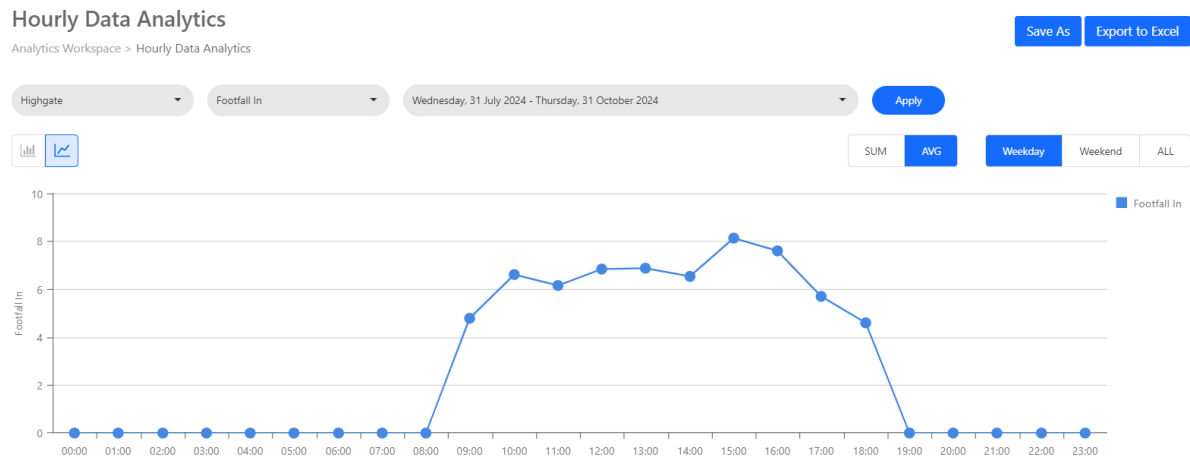


Figure 7: Graph showing the total number of registered users for Haringey's libraries.

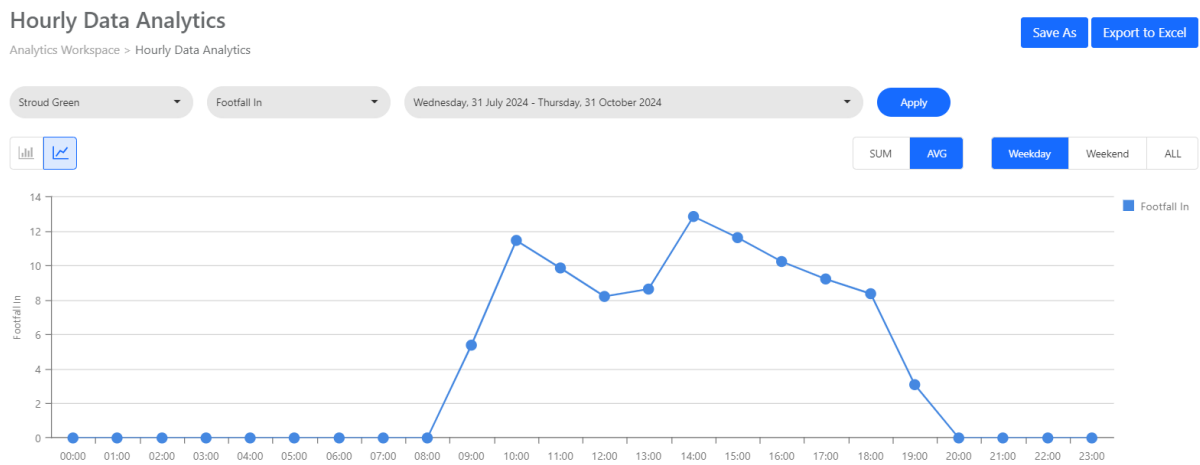
libraries in the borough, with the most 'persons desiring to make use'" of them. The graph below shows the number of registered users at each library and indicates that three of the libraries with the smallest numbers of registered users are those proposed for the shortest opening hours: Highgate (<4000 users), Alexandra Park and Stroud Green & Haringey (both c.5000 users). Hornsey is proposed to have longer opening hours than Wood Green despite Wood Green having twice the number of registered users. This is because on other measures, it can be seen that Hornsey is highly used, such as occupancy figures, book issues and PC log-ins. In putting forward the proposed new opening hours, the council has sought to take account of a range of issues, including but not limited to, numbers of users.

10.3. Taking another measure of ‘persons desiring to make use of’ the service, the Council carefully analysed footfall and occupancy data in developing the options put forward for consultation and then approval by Cabinet. This also shows that two of the libraries put forward for the shortest opening hours have amongst the lowest usage, with hourly average visitor numbers at Highgate never getting above single figures and Stroud Green & Harringay fluctuating between 8 and 12 per hour, shown in the graphs below.

Highgate Library average hourly footfall

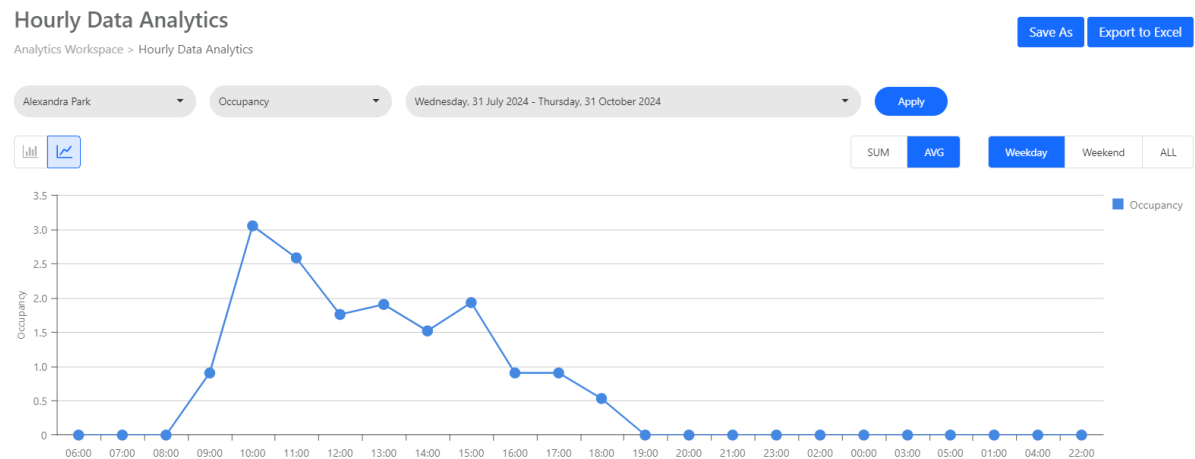


Stroud Green & Harringay Library average hourly footfall

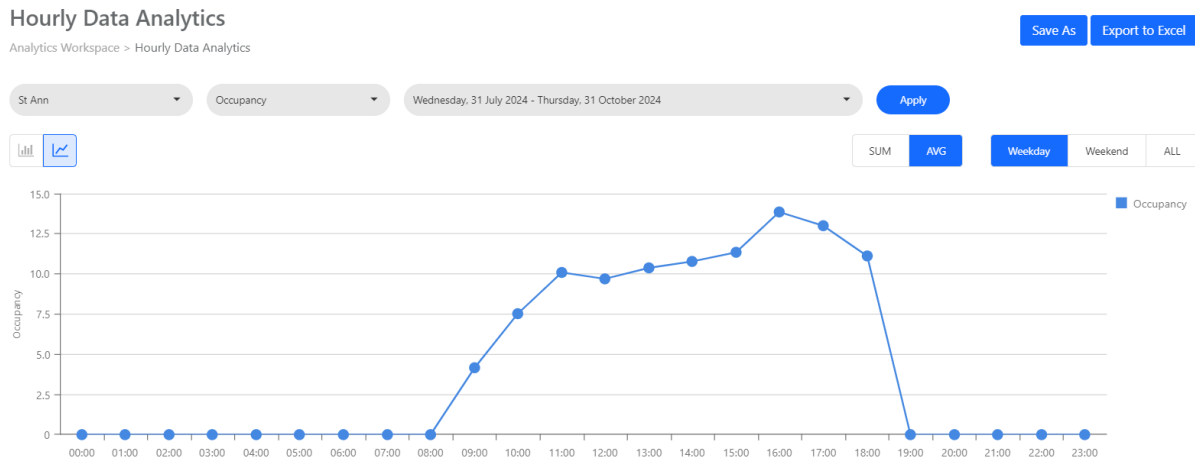


10.4. It is acknowledged that there is higher average footfall in, for example, Alexandra Park Library than in St Ann’s in South Tottenham, which has longer hours proposed than Alexandra Park. It was suggested by Friends groups that occupancy (a measure of users staying in the library) should be considered as well as footfall numbers (entry into the library) and this has also been analysed to give another way of assessing the numbers of ‘persons desiring to make use of’ the library service. On this measure it can be argued that St Ann’s is more highly used throughout the day, as the graphs below demonstrate that during any given hour there will only be between one and three people actually in the library in Alexandra Park, whereas at St Ann’s there will be between 10 and 14.

Alexandra Park average hourly occupancy



St Ann's Library average hourly occupancy

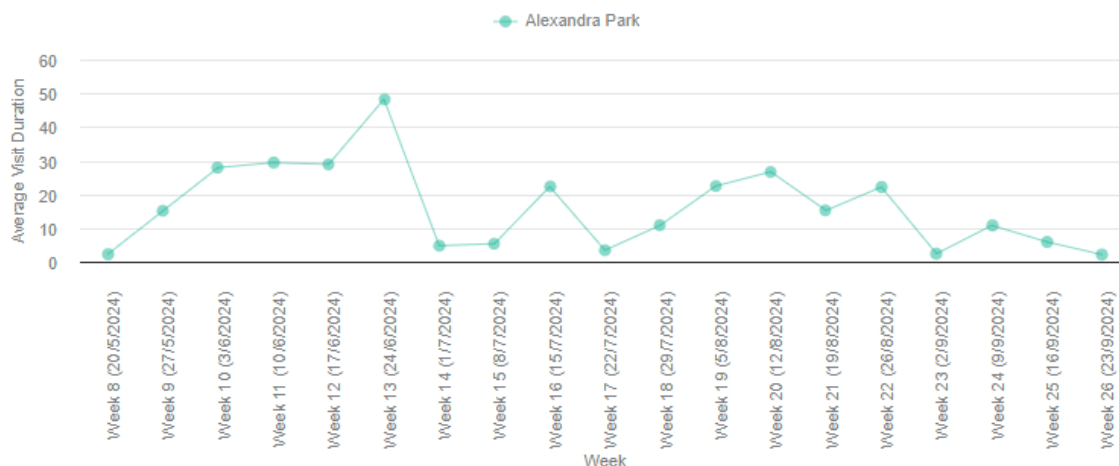


10.5. A further metric for usage could also be considered, which is the length of time that users want or need to spend in the libraries. Footfall Cam can measure average visit duration which suggests that users are spending longer at branches where there is higher socio-economic disadvantage in the catchment area. Other libraries may have higher foot traffic but serve a population with a wider range of alternative resources available. In contrast, libraries in socio-economically disadvantaged areas may have similar or fewer numbers of visitors but provide indispensable services to those who need them most, and those visitors spend longer there. This is illustrated by the graphs below and further validated by evidence from the consultation feedback, as well as service data, all summarised in the needs assessment, which shows that use of libraries for access to free wifi, public computers and space to study was significantly higher for users of Coombes Croft library, serving our most disadvantaged wards.



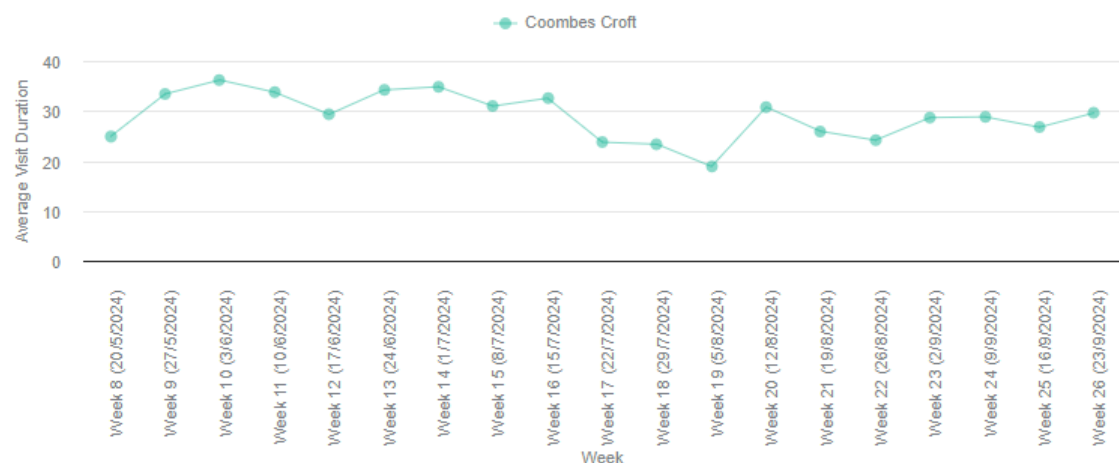
ALEXANDRA PARK - AVERAGE VISIT DURATION

Report Period: 20/05/2024 - 29/09/2024



COOMBES CROFT - AVERAGE VISIT DURATION

Report Period: 20/05/2024 - 29/09/2024



10.6. The data for footfall into the libraries was collated by a system called Footfall Cam which was rolled out between January and July 2024 in all libraries apart from Muswell Hill, which is currently closed because of refurbishment. The data records all people entering the library and can distinguish between multiple people entering at the same time to ensure accuracy and integrity in the data presented in the needs assessment report. Footfall Cam calculates occupancy as *'the cumulative IN at that time minus the cumulative OUT at that time. Example: The average occupancy at 12pm will*

be the cumulative IN count until 12pm minus the cumulative OUT count at 12pm.' This robust data collection using the best available data has enabled us to identify patterns and trends, which have informed our proposals for the libraries' opening hours. We have further validated these using historic data and other sources such as information from borrowing and log-ins to identify which library users are attending which library and what they are using them for.

- 10.7. Haringey has maintained the same number of libraries and a relatively high level of opening hours, despite the last decade and a half of austerity, and has seen library usage fall by 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. Opening hours are not the only factor affecting the numbers of people wanting to make use of the library service and there is not an automatic link between the two as we have maintained the same hours but have nonetheless seen a considerable reduction.
- 10.8. It is important to note that the way in which people want to make use of the library service has fundamentally shifted in the last five years, particularly since the pandemic. People now borrow more digital items (e-books and audio-books) on-line than are borrowed in hard copy from any of the six branch libraries. From around 500 digital items issued per month in April 2019 there were 6,200 digital items issued in September 2024. Since Muswell Hill Library has been closed for refurbishment, we can see that 41% of that library's registered users have chosen to borrow digital items rather than visit another library to make use of the service.
- 10.9. The Council has, in accordance with the DCMS Guidance, considered the needs of the borough's library users – and potential users – in designing an offer based on the principle of equity. Option 2 and the revised Option 3 are based on maintaining the opening hours of the library service in the areas where there is greatest need for the benefits offered by libraries, as safe, warm, free spaces, providing free wifi and internet access as well as books and other materials. The needs assessment which informed the proposals put to Cabinet evidenced the significant need that the library service is seeking to meet. Nine of Haringey's 21 wards are within England's 20% most deprived wards, predominantly in the east of the borough. Northumberland Park and White Hart Lane (both served by Coombes Croft Library) are Haringey's two most deprived wards. Northumberland Park is the most deprived ward in London, and White Hart Lane is the 4th.
- 10.10. Nonetheless, in designing its equity-based service offer, the Council did take into account the feedback from users of libraries in the west of the borough who were over-represented in the consultation responses. Compared with Option 2, Option 3 offers 27 extra hours per week to libraries in the centre and west of the borough, including the restoration of a seven-day a week service

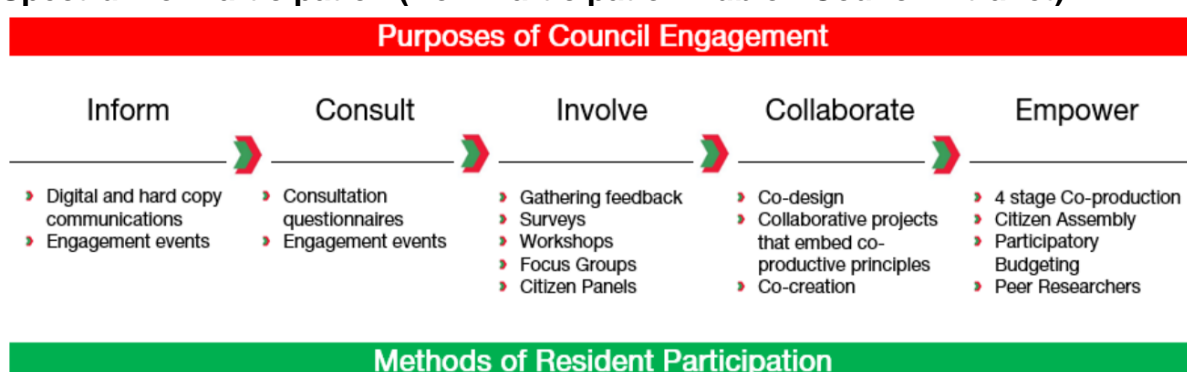
at Hornsey Library and a significant increase of 12 additional hours per week at Muswell Hill Library.

10.11. All the individual libraries footfall and occupancy figures are contained in the appendices to the needs assessment attached as Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report. As examined in detail above, there are many different ways to measure the numbers of 'persons desiring to make use of' the library service, giving a complex picture of usage which needs to be considered in the round. On a number of measures however, the proposal approved by Cabinet in December, sought to take usage as well as need into account, and so this point of the call-in is rejected.

11. Call-in point 5: Consultation with residents and Friends groups did not meet the council's principles of co-design as set out in the new Arts & Culture Strategy, which was acknowledged by the Director of the Service at the Cabinet meeting.

11.1. Co-design is one of the methods of participation and engagement adopted by the Council under the commitments of the Haringey Deal. However, the Council's guidance on implementation of the Haringey Deal advises that *"The most effective participatory method for each project should be determined on a case-by-case basis and should be linked to the purpose of the engagement, as shown below."*

Spectrum of Participation (from Participation Hub on Council intranet)



11.2. The consultation carried out to inform the review of the libraries operating hours was exactly that, a consultation, but we sought to offer further opportunities for participation by carrying out additional activities from the involvement stage of the spectrum, such as gathering feedback on the principles on which we would be consulting from the Friends of Reading and Education, and offering workshop style sessions to individual Friends groups, as well as holding sessions with other target groups such as young people and pensioners groups.

11.3. Attached as appendices are a selection of the presentations used in engagements with FORE in the early stages of developing the proposals, on 1st March, 19th March and 21st May 2024. There were other sessions with FORE, these are just illustrative. In our engagement with FORE, and in their responses to the consultation, Friends Groups were very clear that they were

opposed in principle to any reduction in library opening hours and so they did not want it to be suggested that they had been involved in co-designing the options being consulted on or put forward for approval. Officers did take into account feedback from FORE and individual Friends Groups and this is detailed throughout the Cabinet report, for example in paragraphs 5.2, 5.8, 6.23, 6.32, 6.35, 6.38, 6.50.4 and 6.71, and there is also a section summarising the organisational responses received at paragraph 6.29.

11.4. The principles for consulting on changes to library services are clearly defined in the DCMS Guidance, which we have followed:

“A consultation needs to:

- occur when proposals are formative and still at an early stage*
- clearly define the scope for stakeholder input, which must be meaningful*
- give sufficient information about the proposals to ensure that those consulted understand the issues and can give informed responses*
- give adequate time for consideration and response*
- factor in the time taken for the different stages of local processes*

Responses to consultation should be taken into account when finalising any proposal and an explanation given of how these responses have informed the proposal.”

11.5. The report presented to and approved by Cabinet in December set out how the Council followed these principles as well as our own consultation and involvement principles under the Haringey Deal, and this is contained in paragraphs 6.6-6.35 and at Appendices 3 and 4 of the Cabinet report, the Consultation Document and Consultation Report respectively. The Council considers that the process followed is compliant with both its own internal consultation and participation guidance and with DCMS Guidance and therefore this point of the call-in is rejected.

12. Call-in point 6: The council consulted on two options with the public, but in event a third option, not consulted on, was agreed by Cabinet. That other options were possible was not communicated to the public during the consultation period.

12.1. The statement *“that other options were possible was not communicated to the public during the consultation period”* is not correct. The consultation document was very clear in a number of places that the options and hours could change, and that other suggestions and options were welcomed. For example:

12.2. On page 3 of the document “Why we need to review opening hours” it states:

“The options set out in this consultation document are working models. This means that the options for opening hours are being provided to explain different possible approaches and facilitate consultees providing feedback. The models and the hours proposed are subject to revision following the consultation.”

12.3. On page 6 of the document "Other cost-saving options considered" it explains what other options have been considered and are not currently being put forward, but states: *"Nonetheless, we recognise that those responding to this consultation may wish to express a view about alternative ways of achieving savings."* The consultation questionnaire then asks respondents: *"Do you have any other suggestions as to how the Council should make the savings set out in the budget?"*.

12.4. On pages 14 and 18 of the document, before the opening hours for each library under each of the two options are set out in detail, it states: *"The opening hours proposal below is subject to change taking into consideration public feedback from the consultation process. Please consult the table alongside the explanatory text beneath it and give your feedback in the consultation questionnaire."*

12.5. This call-in point is factually inaccurate and is therefore rejected.

13. Call-in point 7: Councillors are required by law not to predetermine decisions. However, the council released a press statement a week in advance of Cabinet's decision, entitled "Haringey libraries set to remain open with reduced hours" and including a quote from the relevant Cabinet Member, Cllr Arkell, "there will now be reduced hours ... Something that came across strongly in a lot of the responses was the need for our library provision to be equitable and fair across the borough and we believe we've delivered that." This indicates that the decision may have been predetermined, and that the decision had, in effect, been agreed by Cabinet prior to the meeting.

13.1. It is acknowledged that a press release was issued prematurely on the 3 December after the proposals had been published for the Cabinet meeting but before the meeting itself. This error was drawn to officers' attention on the evening of the 4 December and the press statement was corrected on the 5 December. The Communications team have been reminded to be careful when drafting to distinguish between releases to be issued before decisions are made and those to be issued afterwards.

13.2. The decision was taken on 10 December at the Cabinet meeting and following a lengthy debate between Cabinet members, who, along with the Opposition representative and a local ward councillor, asked a series of questions to which the Lead Member and officers had to respond, before the recommendations were approved. This is set out in the detailed draft minutes published on the Council website and linked in the Background Information section below, indicating that the decision was not pre-determined or 'noddled through' but given careful consideration by Members at the Cabinet meeting.

13.3. It is accepted that there was an error in the timing of the press release but the substantive decision was not pre-determined but was correctly taken on the 10 December and the error was corrected as soon as it was drawn to officers' attention. This point of the call-in is therefore rejected.

14. Call-in point 8: The requisite parts of the Policy Framework are not in place to allow Cabinet to take an informed decision on the reduction in library hours. Without proper strategies in place it is impossible to take a view on whether these cuts provide value for residents.

14.1. This point has been answered in sections 7-9 in response to call-in points 1-3. The Needs Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and consultation report, together with the strategic framework for libraries set by the Corporate Delivery Plan and Arts & Culture Strategy, provided a wealth of information to enable Cabinet to take an informed decision. DCMS Guidance has been followed and it states that: "*Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.*". Accordingly, this point of the call-in is rejected and OSC is asked to allow the Cabinet decision to proceed.

15. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High level Strategic outcomes?

15.1 The contribution of the decision regarding strategic outcomes was set out in the report to Cabinet on 10 December 2024.

16. Carbon and Climate Change

16.1 The carbon implications of the decision taken by Cabinet were highlighted in the Cabinet report on 10 December 2024.

17. Statutory Officers' comments

Finance

17.1 The Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report. The financial implications of the decision taken by Cabinet were highlighted in the Cabinet report on 10 December 2024.

Procurement

17.2 Strategic Procurement notes the contents of this report. The Call-In primarily relates to a policy decision; therefore, Procurement comments are not applicable as this sits outside of the Procurement Contract Regulations.

Assistant Director of Legal & Governance

17.3 The legal implications of the decision taken by Cabinet were highlighted in the Cabinet report on 10 December 2024.

Equality

17.4 The equality implications of the decision taken by Cabinet were highlighted in the Cabinet report on 10 December 2024.

18. Use of Appendices

None

19. Background papers

Review of Libraries Operating Hours Cabinet Report – 10 December 2024:
[Issue - items at meetings - Review of Libraries Operating Hours | Haringey Council](#)

Council Participation Guidance: [Participation | Intranet](#)

DCMS Guidance - Libraries as a Statutory Service:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service>