

Report for: Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure – Cllr Emily Arkell

Title: Variation of Libraries Operating Hours

Report authorised by : Corporate Director for Culture, Strategy and Communities – **Jess Crowe**

Lead Officer: Director, Culture & Communities – **Kenneth Tharp**

Ward(s) affected: All

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

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 This report seeks Cabinet Member confirmation of delegated approval to:

1.1.1 Implement the variations to libraries operating hours originally approved by Cabinet on 10 December 2024, following staff consultation, as set out in recommendation 3.1.5 in that Cabinet report.

1.2 The original key decision published and then taken in December 2024 was to implement the recommended model for the new operating hours, subject to final confirmation by the Cabinet Member following staff consultation in case there were material changes to the model agreed by Cabinet.

1.3 Staff consultation, including with recognised trade unions, has been carried out on the revised opening hours and the new staffing structure required to implement the Cabinet decision. While some changes were made to the originally proposed staffing arrangements as a result of the staff consultation, no changes have been made to the pattern of opening hours originally agreed by Cabinet.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A

3. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member:

3.1 Confirms approval to implement the variation to libraries operating hours originally approved by Cabinet on 10 December 2024, following the conclusion of staff consultation and development and testing of a revised staffing structure.

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. This was all carried out to inform the original decision taken by Cabinet in December 2024.
- 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 undertook a detailed Needs Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment to inform the proposal agreed by Cabinet in December 2024. The public consultation that was carried out between August and October 2024 provided vital feedback on how consultees use the libraries and what they most value about them. Following that consultation, Cabinet adopted Option 3 which mitigated the impact of reducing library hours specifically including the impact on those with protected characteristics.
- 4.3** The changes approved in Option 3 included maintaining lunchtime opening to enable continuous access to all library services, without midday interruptions. For this to be possible, the library service had to increase existing lone-working practices, and this was a particular focus of the consultation with staff and Trade Unions. Advice has also been sought from the Council's Health & Safety team and a number of measures have been implemented, including staff training, provision of lone working devices and coverage of all libraries with CCTV, to ensure staff and customer safety. Lessons were also drawn from other boroughs with experience of significantly more lone working than is proposed to be implemented in Haringey.
- 4.4** Library staff were engaged throughout the development of the proposals and formal staff consultation has now taken place, with the final proposed staffing structure incorporating changes to individual job titles, roles and reporting arrangements, based on staff and trade union feedback. However, the operating hours and other arrangements set out in Option 3 in the Cabinet report in December 2024 are unchanged.
- 4.5** The proposals do not therefore need to return to Cabinet for further consideration, and following a 'soft' go live on 29 September 2025 and a transitional arrangement between then and now, to ensure there were no unforeseen issues or problems, this report requests that the Cabinet member confirms the original decision as set out at recommendation 3.1.5 in the December report. The service will then confirm

the revised staffing structure in the Council workforce and payroll system, approved formally by officers under their delegated authority subject to this decision.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Take no action** – The new structure and opening hours are required to deliver the library service savings so not taking the decision is not an option and was discounted.
- 5.2 Alternative proposals** – some alternatives were put forward during the staff consultation and these were considered in full. Where these could be incorporated while still maintaining the hours and overall financial envelope agreed in the December 2024 Cabinet report these were adopted, such as retention of the Library Development function and Home Library Service. Others such as concerns over lone working were considered carefully and mitigations to identified risks have been found.

6. Background information

- 6.1** In Haringey, we are proud of our libraries. The council has maintained longer opening hours than most of its statistical neighbours despite continuing financial challenges. 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. Haringey has managed to protect libraries from cuts during the long years of austerity, but due to severe constraints on council funding nationally the council is unable to sustain the previous operating model and agreed savings of £675k to come from a reduction in opening hours as part of its 2024/25 budget.
- 6.2** 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.
- 6.3** At the Cabinet meeting to consider the outcome of the public consultation in December 2024, Members agreed that a revised Option 3 was the preferred option. This was based on Option 2 but made changes to that model based on feedback from the consultation. The Cabinet also considered the requirements of the statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service, as set out in the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act and subsequent guidance, the detailed Needs Assessment carried out to inform the options put forward and a full Equalities Impact Assessment, as well as a report summarising the feedback from the consultation.

6.4 The model agreed by Cabinet in 2024 reflected extensive public feedback and adopted 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.

6.5 The final confirmed opening hours for all libraries in Haringey are set out below. These had a 'soft' go live on 29 September 2025 following a staffing restructure to deliver new working arrangements and rotas before presenting the final decision to the Lead Member for approval. The restructure involved a number of inter-dependent changes, requiring sustained coordination through a group consisting of Libraries management, HR, Occupational Health, Health & Safety, and union representatives. In line with the Organisational Change Policy and following a collectively agreed next step by the aforementioned working group, a transitional approach was adopted to ensure the go-live date of 29th September was met. Proceeding with a 'soft' launch has enabled continuity of service and provided space to address operational refinements. This approach is helping to minimise disruption to staff and library users, ensuring a stable foundation as remaining processes are finalised and embedded, before seeking final confirmation of the decision. There are no further changes required and the final timetable is as previously approved by Cabinet and set out below.

| Library | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun | Total Hours / Week |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Alexandra Park | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 9:30am– 6:00pm | Closed | 9:30am – 6:00pm | Closed | 10:00am –5:00pm | Closed | 32.5 |
| Coombe's Croft | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 9:30am– 6:00pm | 9:30am– 6:00pm | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 10:00am –5:00pm | Closed | 49.5 |
| Highgate | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 9:30am– 6:00pm | Closed | 9:30am – 6:00pm | Closed | 10:00am – 5:00pm | Closed | 32.5 |
| Hornsey | 10:00am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 7:00pm | 10:00am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 5:00pm | 12:00pm – 4:00pm | 52 |
| Marcus Garvey | 9:00am – 6:00pm | 9:00am– 6:00pm | 10:00am – 6:00pm | 9:00am – 7:00pm | 9:00am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 5:00pm | 12:00pm – 4:00pm | 56 |

| Library | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun | Total Hours / Week |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|--------|--------------------|
| Muswell Hill | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 9:30am– 6:00pm | 9:30am– 6:00pm | Closed | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 5:00pm | Closed | 41 |
| St Ann’s | 9:30am – 6:00pm | Closed | 9:30am– 6:00pm | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 5:00pm | Closed | 41 |
| Stroud Green & Harringay | 9:30am – 6:00pm | Closed | 9:30am– 6:00pm | Closed | 9:30am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 5:00pm | Closed | 32.5 |
| Wood Green | 9:00am – 6:00pm | 9:00am– 6:00pm | 10:00am – 7:00pm | 9:00am – 6:00pm | 9:00am – 6:00pm | 10:00am – 5:00pm | Closed | 52 |

7. Contribution to 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 the revision of operating hours for libraries, the Needs Assessment, consultation and engagement carried out to inform the original proposals provided a foundation for the development of the libraries strategy, which is scheduled to come back to Cabinet for approval in January 2026.
- 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. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Director of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

Finance

The review of library opening hours and associated £675,000 saving formed part of the Final 24/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by Full Council on 4th March 2024, and the Finance comments in the December 2024 Cabinet

Report noted that the proposals would substantially meet the saving target. Following formal staff consultation some minor changes were made to the originally proposed staffing arrangements which are budget neutral.

The total severance costs from the staff restructure have not been finalised however it is not expected to exceed £102,000. These costs will be met by the Service in line with the current organisational change policy.

Procurement

Strategic Procurement has been consulted in the preparation of this report and notes the contents herein. There are no current procurement implications.

Legal

Cabinet resolved on 10 December 2024 “To 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.”

This report outlines the staff consultation undertaken and soft implementation of the revised operating model and hours with effect from 29 September. In circumstances where there are no significant revisions required to the model approved in principle by Cabinet on 10 December 2024, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure is authorised to formally approve the revised library operating hours as proposed in the report.

Equality

The council has a Public Sector Equality Duty 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.

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/fait, 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.

The proposals approved in December 2024 and the subsequent staff consultation took account of these needs and the associated statutory duties and good practice guidelines. A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the development and consultation process around the proposed model, and a further EqlA has been carried out as part of the staff consultation, which will be finalised once the restructure is complete.

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A