

MINUTES OF THE MEETING Cabinet Member Signing HELD ON Monday, 8th December, 2025, 1.00 - 1.41 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Emily Arkell

ALSO ATTENDING:

Councillors: Alessandra Rossetti

11. FILMING AT MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

The filming at meetings notice was noted.

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

14. URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

15. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / QUESTIONS

A deputation request was received by John Fynaut, and was presented by John Fynaut, Theresa Finnegan, Sarah McGuire and Ana Reynal.

It was explained that the deputation asked for an increase in total weekly hours for Alexandra Park library, leading to an increase in the number of days Alexandra Park would be open. It was suggested that the current allocation was not consistent with actual usage nor considered Equal Opportunities for protected groups. It was additionally suggested that the decision did not consider the wide area served. It was explained that the community had undertaken a volunteer survey to determine the request for an increase in total weekly hours for Alexandra Park library.

It was explained that the site was well used as a congregation site for students, by new parents, disabled, pensioners, Council staff and other diverse groups. It was

suggested that the Council needed to consider the equalities implications for the site better.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure responded that they had protected and invested £4.9 million in the borough's libraries from the effect and impact of austerity however possible despite rising pressures on the Council's finances. In December 2024, Cabinet agreed to reduce opening hours to around the capital's average to keep all nine libraries open despite severe financial pressures. It was stressed that the Alexandra Park Library had been treated equitably in comparison with other libraries across the borough, and that the changes were part of a boroughwide strategy to keep libraries open.

It was explained that the Council had undertaken a fair consultation, and had worked with residents and central government, as well as gained feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was explained that toilet access would be a potential issue, but that the Council would be reviewing a Toilet Strategy and Action Plan which would look to deliver improvements to toilet access in the borough.

It was finally noted in the response that the Council would, in early 2026, be looking to review a library strategy.

16. VARIATION OF LIBRARIES OPERATING HOURS - CONFIRMATION

The Corporate Director of Culture, Strategy and Communities introduced the report. The rationale of the report was outlined.

It was explained that the Council had undertaken a formal staff consultation and had made some changes to proposals based on the feedback from staff and Trade Unions.

It was noted that the proposals in the report aimed to confirm the decision made to changes in library opening hours in December 2024.

Following questions from the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, it was assured by officers that the data collected in the report was of good quality, and that while it was noted there were some early issues with data capture, these had been since resolved. It was additionally noted the Council had implemented an improved system to capture data by the hour. It was highlighted that the future Libraries Strategy would propose more transparent reporting of these datasets in the future.

It was noted that alternative options were considered, which were explained fully within the report, including looking at unstaffed libraries during extended hours, and use of volunteers during extended hours, which were not supported as feasible options at the point of the proposal.

Following questions from Cllr Rossetti, the following points were made:

- It was explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Function would provide input on the upcoming Libraries Strategy.
- That data was developed by an external supplier, and that the Council worked with the supplier to ensure its integrity. It was explained that the Council would continue to monitor footfall and that the Council was looking to increase footfall across all libraries.
- It was explained that any severance costs that were made as a result of any changes to hours would be a one-off cost, and that these would be borne by the in-year budget. It was additionally noted that Saturday hours had been changed across the whole organisation, and that these costs would be factored into overall running costs.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member Culture and Leisure:

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

Reasons for decision

The council had a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for those who lived, worked or studied in the borough. The duty was supplemented by government guidance, which although not statutory, still had to be taken into account. The guidance advised 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.

To address how it would 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 used the libraries and what they most valued 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.

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 was also sought from the Council's Health & Safety team and a number of measures were 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 was proposed to be implemented in Haringey.

Library staff were engaged throughout the development of the proposals and formal staff consultation took 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 remained unchanged.

The proposals did 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 requested that the Cabinet member confirmed the original decision as set out at recommendation 3.1.5 in the December report. The service then confirmed the revised staffing structure in the Council workforce and payroll system, approved formally by officers under their delegated authority subject to this decision.

Alternative options considered

Take no action – The new structure and opening hours were required to deliver the library service savings, so not taking the decision was not an option and was discounted.

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 were found.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date