

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive Member for Leisure and Community for Decision Tuesday 17 March 2020

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Hampshire Library Service Public Consultation
Report of:	Director of Leisure and Community
Corporate Priority:	Leisure Opportunities for Health and Fun

Purpose:

Hampshire County Council is asking for residents' and stakeholders' views, including those of Fareham Borough Council, on the proposed changes to the Hampshire Library Service.

Executive Summary:

Hampshire has one of the largest library services in the country, with a network of 48 council-run libraries.

Within the Borough of Fareham there are four libraries managed and operated by Hampshire County Council. These are in Stubbington, Portchester, Locks Heath and Fareham Town Centre.

Hampshire County Council is committed to providing a high-quality library service, fit for the future, that responds to a new generation of library customers. Their view is that the right thing to do is to focus the resources they have in areas where they will be of most benefit. This will then make the library service relevant in a way that will improve the literacy, life chances and wellbeing of Hampshire residents.

At the same time, Hampshire County Council is facing an anticipated budget shortfall of £80m by April 2021. The Council is having to look across all of its services to find savings to help bridge this gap, and the Library Service is required to identify £1.76m towards that overall savings target.

As a stakeholder, Fareham Borough Council has been invited to give its views on;

- the emerging vision for Hampshire's Libraries to 2025;
- the level of need for library services in specific local communities;
- proposed changes to the Library Service and the potential impacts; and
- any alternatives that respondents may wish to propose.

The proposals outlined in the Library Service Consultation Information Pack, have been compiled following extensive research and consultation at both a national and local level to help understand what service users' value and how demand for Library Services continue to change, for example, fewer people are physically accessing library buildings and more people are now choosing to use the digital services that the library provides instead.

Considering how service users' needs are changing, the Library Service intends to focus developing its future vision on three priorities; promoting reading; supporting healthy, creative communities; and investing in digital services.

Hampshire has seen a fall in the overall number of physical items issued by libraries from almost 6.8 million in 2009/10 to 5 million in 2018/19. However, the number of online/digital library downloads has grown to 360,000 in 2018/19 since the service started in 2009/10.

The proposals within the consultation information pack have been carefully thought through and offer genuine choice for its users. As well as increasing income and improving business efficiency, the consultation includes proposals for changes to the way services are delivered. This includes options to close up to 10 council-run libraries across Hampshire and reduce opening hours in others. It also considers exploring better ways to deliver library services in deprived communities.

Hampshire County Council is asking for residents' and stakeholders to have their say on the proposed changes to the Hampshire Library Service via a public consultation exercise, ending on 18 March 2020.

All feedback will be collated and used to inform decisions to be made by Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Recreation and Heritage in Summer 2020.

Recommendation:

That the Executive Member for Leisure and Community: -

- a) considers the content of this report and the Library Service Consultation Information Pack;
- b) acknowledges that no Fareham libraries are proposed for closure, but they may have a reduction in opening hours following further consultation, and
- c) supports the Library Service's intention to focus its future vision on three key priorities.

Reason: To give feedback from Fareham Borough Council in accordance with the public consultation for Hampshire's Library Service.

Risk Assessment: There are no identified risks associated with this report.

Background paper: [Library Service Consultation Information Pack](#)