

Agenda Item 16.

TITLE	Comprehensive and Efficient Library Service
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 28 June 2018
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment - Norman Jorgensen

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Library Services support the achievement of vibrant and self-sustaining communities through the provision of materials and services for enjoyment, education, creative and engagement activities.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) approve the arrangements to mitigate the impact on the Council and its statutory requirements for the provision of Library Services following notice being served by the Maiden Erlegh School to vacate the Maiden Erlegh School library site;
- 2) agree that the book purchasing and staffing resource is redeployed across the remaining library sites.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council operates a very successful Library Service which has increased its usage against a national picture of declining activity within libraries.

The Library Service has a substantial amount of contact with residents each year, going beyond the historical role of libraries to enable a broad range of services and activities that support the vision priorities of the Council.

Recently, the Council has been instructed to vacate the school site due to the school requiring the space for educational purposes and therefore it will no longer be able to operate a library from this site.

The Public Libraries & Museums Act (1964) requires the Council to operate a comprehensive and efficient library service.

This report considers the impact of no longer operating a library from the Maiden Erlegh School and demonstrates how the Council is continuing to meet its statutory obligations for the Library Service.

BACKGROUND

Libraries are a statutory service for local authorities and Wokingham Borough Council has a long history of implementing this statutory duty robustly, economically and flexibly. For many years, we have developed creative ways to not only encourage users into the Libraries themselves, but also to take the Library to those who cannot always make a physical visit.

Statutory Requirements

Local councils have to abide by the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 which makes public library services a statutory duty for local authorities.

The Act requires the Council to:

- Provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons in the area that want to make use of it.
- Lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area.

Aside from this general requirement for local authorities there are very few additional regulations which dictate what and how local authorities are required to provide.

The key elements that have to be included within a library service can be summarised as:

- Lending of books has to be free.
- Internet usage should be free of charge.
- Lending of ebooks should be free.
- Be able to obtain books we don't have in stock.
- A duty to encourage usage.

The Current Library Service

The Library Service has a substantial and increasing amount of contact with residents each year, going beyond the historical role of libraries to offer a broad range of services and activities that support the vision priorities of the Council.

The library service is delivered through ten library sites and a home library service that cover each population centre in the borough, within premises that range from large purpose built libraries to schools, community centres and porta-cabins.

The Library Offer

In 2016, the Library Offer (see appendix 1) established and promoted the activities that our residents can expect when visiting or using our libraries, including a clear understanding of their contribution to the borough and how they will evolve within the future means of the Council.

The ambition is for our libraries to be welcoming and vibrant places that people are drawn to and to protect the clearly valued heritage of our library services whilst evolving naturally to offer more and more opportunity for residents of all ages to engage in activities and access services. The libraries themselves are to continue to be flexible

and adaptable in terms of their space and their uses, aligning seamlessly with other provision in their area.

Since establishing the Library Offer the Council has successfully implemented self-service in six libraries, relocated the Arborfield Library into the Arborfield Royal British Legion building, provided an extra 17 hours opening time across the borough, and has agreed to relocate Wokingham Library to a new facility as part of the Wokingham Town Centre redevelopment.

A key element of introducing self-service in our libraries was to retain some staffing resource so that those residents who were unable or uncertain about using the kiosks still had the option of engaging directly to a member of staff.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

Maiden Erlegh Library

For 34 years Wokingham Borough Council has operated a dual use library on the Maiden Erlegh School site to provide access to library services for local residents and school pupils. A key element of the arrangement has been that the school has not charged the Council for the use of the space.

This longstanding arrangement between the Council and the school has always included the ability for either organisation to end the lease with four months' notice should either party have a reason to end the service on this site.

At the beginning of 2018 new opening times for the library were introduced in response to a request from the school to mitigate any safeguarding risks associated with opening the library during school hours.

In February 2018, Maiden Erlegh School informed the Council that it wishes to terminate the lease to operate the library from the school and suggested that the library close and vacate the site from the end of the summer school term 2018.

Usage of Maiden Erlegh Library

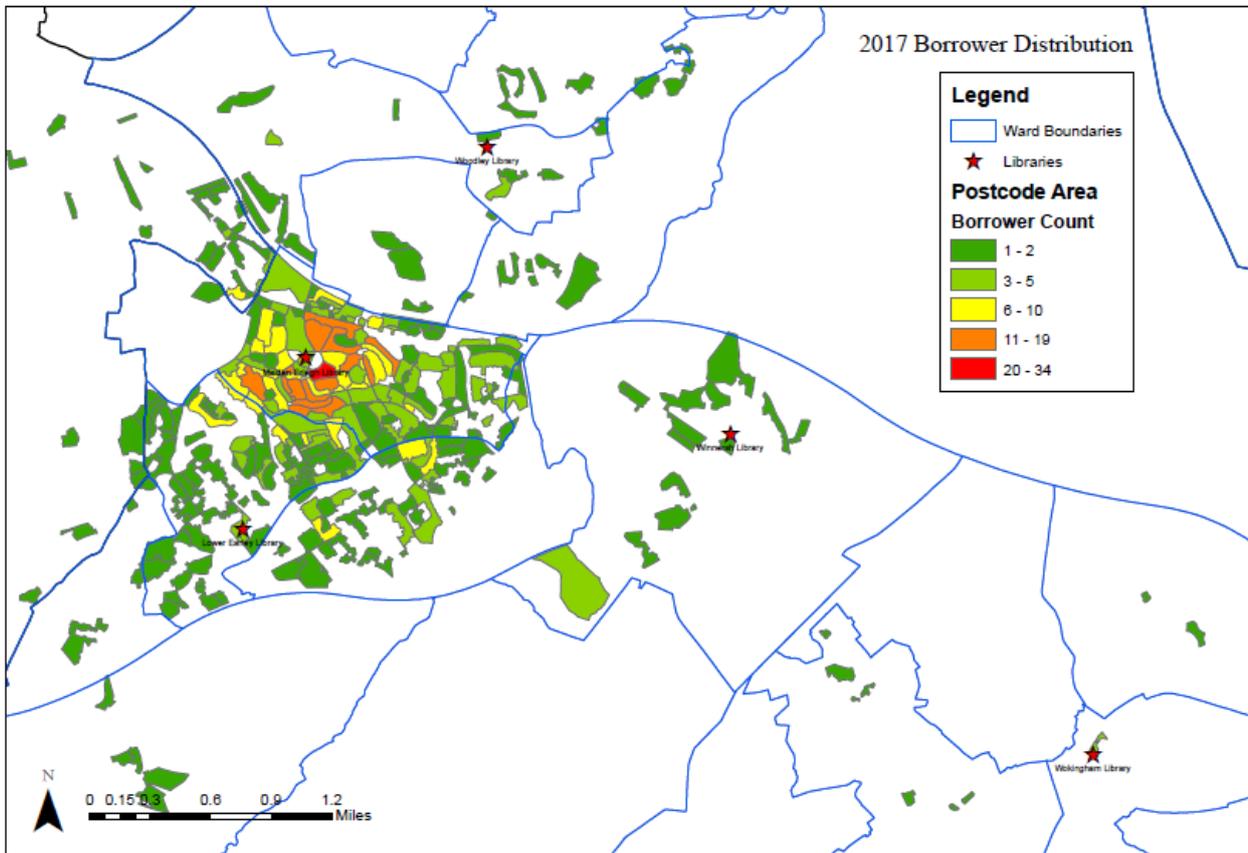
The Maiden Erlegh Library is currently open for 15 hours per week, including being open until the early evening on Thursday and open on Saturday morning.

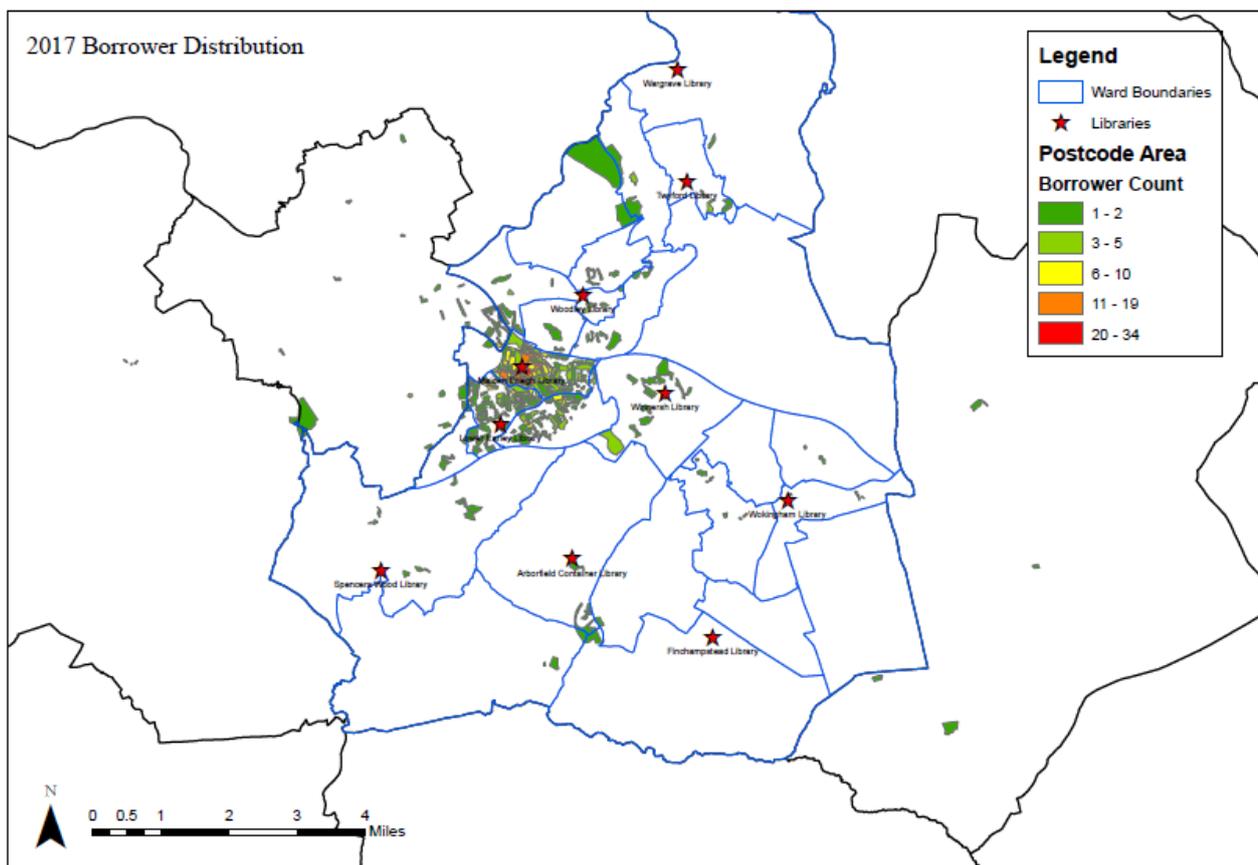
The table below shows the number of visit to Maiden Erlegh Library along with the usage figures for the other nine libraries and the Home Library Service:

	Maiden Erlegh Visits
2012/13	23203
2013/14	24041
2014/15	22393
2015/16	23246
2016/17	23814
2017/18	20606

Across each of the last six years, the visits to Maiden Erlegh Library represent just under 5% of the total visits to libraries across the borough.

The maps below show the distribution across of Maiden Erlegh library users (those who borrowed a book between) 1st Jan 2017 and 31 Dec 2017. The second map also shows the location of the ten libraries across the borough.





Map 2

The table below shows the number of different classification of users of Maiden Erlegh Library and whether they've also used other libraries across the borough:

Borrower type	Used Maiden Erlegh	Used another library	Only used Maiden Erlegh
Pupil	75	47	28
Adult	354	305	49
Child	402	334	68
Teenager	98	79	19
Pensioner	68	62	6
VIP/SEN	5	5	0
Looked After Teenager	1	0	1
Home Educator	1	1	0
Registered Childminder	1	1	0
BookClub	1	1	0
TOTAL	1006	835	171

(March to Dec 2017)

Impact on Library Users

The information above shows that the Maiden Erlegh Library site is substantially closer to other Council libraries than the majority of other library sites. It is approximately 2½ miles from the Woodley Library and only 1 mile from the Lower Earley Library. Both of these libraries are open for substantially longer each week, including Woodley Library being open on both Saturdays and Sundays. In particular, a large number of Maiden Erlegh Library users will not have to travel further to access the Lower Earley Library,

which has much better access arrangements.

It is also clear that the majority of Maiden Erlegh Library users also make use of other libraries across the borough, with just fewer than 17% of library users not making use of other libraries. This is consistent with the broader picture of library usage in recent years, with residents altering which library they use to suit their particular daily circumstances (see appendix 2). Ultimately, the closure of Maiden Erlegh Library will force fewer than 1% of library users to change their habits and make use of different library sites or services.

Therefore the closure of the Maiden Erlegh Library is likely to have a minimal impact upon library users as there are alternative sites nearby and the vast majority of service users also regularly make use of other libraries in the borough. It should also be noted that residents can access a wide range of library services online, removing the need to visit a library site as often as they would have needed to in the past.

Impact On Resources

The costs of operating the Maiden Erlegh Library can be summarise as follows:

- Staffing (£9,135)
- Telecoms (£147)
- Stock Purchases (£8,187)

There are no accommodation costs for the use of the space within Maiden Erlegh School.

The library also takes in approx. £2,500 in income each year.

Due to the absence of any rental or lease costs for operating the Maiden Erlegh Library, the impact on resources is very low. It also means that the costs to the Council of operating the Library Service are likely to substantially increase if the Council was to lease an alternative site in the area.

Continuing to Meet Statutory Requirements

The information above shows that the Council has been successful in providing a well-used library service for the people who live, work and visit the borough. The closure of the Maiden Erlegh Library is likely to have little impact on residents' ability to access library services due to the close proximity of alternative sites that are open substantially longer each week.

If the Council maintains its expenditure on its library stock, library users will still be able to have access to the same number of items. Likewise, if the Council retained the staffing resource, this could be utilised across the library service to ensure that residents still had the same opportunity to engage with a member of staff if they need to.

Any relocation of the Maiden Erlegh Library to another site is likely to substantially increase the operating costs of the service. This would either result in a reduction of service overall or necessitate a larger proportion of funding from the main Council budget. This does not represent an efficient use of resources for service delivery.

It should also be noted that the Council will be opening new library facilities in Shinfield and Arborfield in the near future as part of the infrastructure commitments within the Strategic Development Locations. These will further enhance the options available to residents to access library services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	Yes	Rev
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	Yes	Rev
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	Yes	Rev

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

Cross-Council Implications
None

List of Background Papers
Executive Reports on Library Offer – January 2016 and June 2016

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH LIBRARY OFFER

Access to Services

- The Library Service will adapt to meet the growing population and changing behaviours of our residents.
- The Library Service will utilise opportunities to provide residents with a flexible mix of physical and virtual options for accessing all services
- Improve access to other Wokingham Borough Council services in line with Customer Services vision
- Strong partnership working to ensure flexibility of delivery and access to library services

Library Stock

- Maintain the approach of books being the primary stock type
- Stock purchased will be responsive to the behaviour and needs of our residents
- Increase the numbers of items available in other formats
- Continue to ensure that we hold the books that people most want

Visiting and Using Library Buildings

- The environment within libraries will be welcoming and enjoyable
- Buildings will be flexible and adaptable to changing demands for their use
- Enable access to other types of services including other council services, health services and local community and voluntary services
- They will provide space for locally focused events and activities that develop a sense of community
- Actively identify events and services that support the broader Council vision

Technology

- The Library Service will continue to grow its online services to provide more opportunity for residents to access services when they want them.
- Invest in technologies that support learning and self-sustaining behaviours in residents.
- Increase the range of services within libraries by enabling payments for other Council services.
- Respond to natural opportunities to deliver a greater range of Council services within libraries.

Income Generation

- Income generation ideas will feel a natural extension of our services and activities
- Where opportunities for investment present themselves we will look to gain the most value from them so as to minimise the need for further investments in the future

Supporting Wokingham Borough Council Vision

- The library service will continue to identify ways to directly support Wokingham Borough Council's vision for the borough
- Maintain or improve on the usage of library services so that they remain a valuable method of supporting and promoting other Council services.

Library Choices

Wokingham borough is a mix of urban and semi-rural neighbourhoods with its population centres spread across a relatively dispersed geographical area. In providing a comprehensive library service for the borough, the Council has located a library within most of the populated areas so that people can directly access these services.

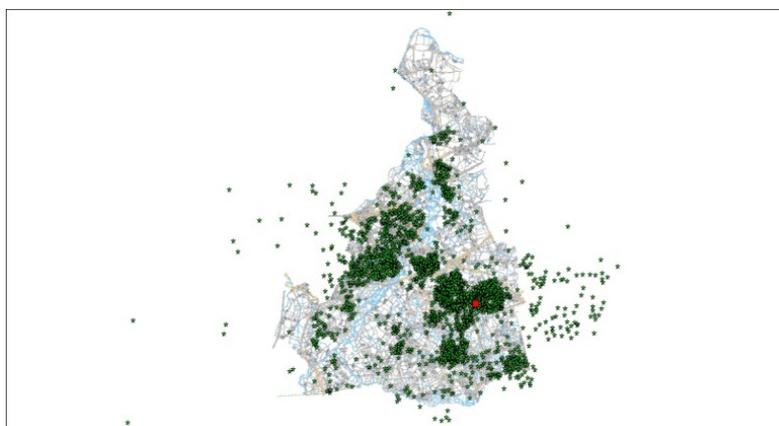
A consequence of this is that people have a degree of choice about which library they use, with most residents having at least two libraries within a few miles of their homes. The table below shows the percentage for each library of the different distances that people have travelled to use them.

	0 - 1 miles	1 - 2 miles	2 - 3 miles	3 - 5 miles	5+ miles
Wokingham	35.98%	29.53%	13.22%	15.94%	5.33%
Woodley	53.71%	23.16%	13.15%	7.86%	2.12%
Lower Earley	62.63%	22.31%	7.65%	6.55%	0.86%
Winnersh	45.27%	21.44%	15.42%	14.64%	3.23%
Finchampstead	50.68%	18.16%	16.18%	12.39%	2.60%
Twyford	81.67%	9.92%	2.85%	4.51%	1.05%
Maiden Erleigh	82.65%	9.59%	2.14%	4.08%	1.53%
Spencers Wood	60.77%	20.58%	8.92%	6.04%	3.70%
Wargrave	69.10%	14.61%	6.37%	5.99%	3.93%
Arborfield	50.62%	9.88%	20.99%	14.81%	3.70%

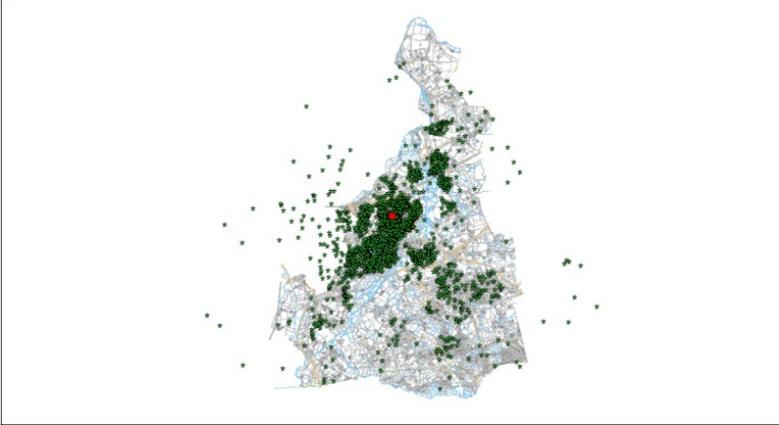
(2015/16 Data)

We can understand this further by mapping the home postcodes of the users of each library to show the catchment area of each library. Below are maps showing catchment areas for boroughs most well-used libraries:

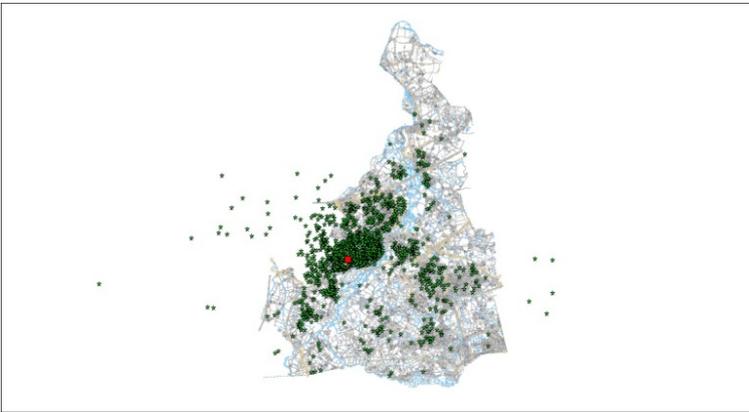
- Wokingham Library



- Woodley Library



- Lower Earley Library



From this we can see that each library is being used by residents from all over the borough.

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