

Libraries Consultation

Cabinet: Monday 18 October 2021

<https://democracy.slough.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=109&Mid=6746>



Libraries Consultation

Summary

- Incremental changes to our library service, impact of Covid and S114 means the time is right to make sure our library service is fit for the future.
- The **Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964** states that the council has to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service.
- Guidance from government (**DCMS**) and case law has determined that any changes to library service delivery must only be implemented after a fair process has been followed and this includes:
 - A robust **Needs Assessment**
 - A thorough **Equality Impact Assessment**
 - Public and stakeholder **consultation**
 - Clear decisions taken by **Cabinet**

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Needs Assessment

- Needs Assessment is at **Appendix A**.
- It outlines Slough's **demographics**, current library service **usage** and the **national context** to in relation to the delivery of library services.
- It includes 3 **recommendations**
 - ✓ Ensure that library services are affordable and **deliver value for money**
 - ✓ Ensure library services are accessible and **meet local needs**
 - ✓ Support and promote **good use of technology** including digitalisation of services where appropriate

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Equality Impact Assessment

- A baseline Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is at **Appendix B**.
- It considers the **potential impact** of some changes on specific groups with protected characteristics.
- This EIA will need to be reviewed and the suggested action plan **re-written** to take the results of the public consultation into account.

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Consultation

- The consultation document is at **Appendix C**.
- The consultation suggests that our new library service has to accommodate **7 areas for consideration** (key issues for the library service). We ask consultees to rank these key issues in order of importance.
- The consultation also proposes **5 possible models** for how a future library service could be delivered. We ask consultees to tell us which are their top 3 options.
- The consultation asks people **why** they use our libraries, **when** do they use our libraries and what would they like to see delivered by a **future** library service?

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Issues for consideration

1. Make sure the amount of money spent on buying **new hard copy** books is in line with the **average** amount spent by other councils which are most like Slough.
2. Make sure the amount of money spent on buying **new eResources** is in line with the **average** amount spent by other councils which are most like Slough.
3. Make sure that **library buildings are used efficiently**. This will include seeing if other services can be offered from library buildings with, or instead of the current library service.
4. Make sure that there is careful consideration of all opportunities to **deliver library services from other locations** in communities if this is efficient and effective.
5. Ensure that library services are open and **available at times when they are most needed** and understand that this may reduce the numbers of hours physical libraries are open each week.
6. Ensure that library **staff are available to deliver services at times when they are most needed**, and that this may reduce the numbers of hours library staff are available each week whether that is on-line or in person.
7. Make sure that wherever possible and practical, services are provided **virtually and on-line**.

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Models of delivery

1. Reduce the money available to spend on buying **publications** (both hard copy and eResources)
2. Keep all the main library **buildings open** but **reduce the opening and staffed hours** at Langley and Cippenham and reduce the staffed hours at The Curve and Britwell libraries.
3. Close both Langley and Cippenham library buildings but **maintain the staffing and opening hours** at The Curve library and at Britwell library.
4. Keep all library buildings but **reduce the hours they are open, the hours they are staffed, and the space dedicated to the library**. Attract other users to rent space in the library building alongside the reduced library (co-location).
5. Move all library services out of the current main library buildings and **re-locate services** to be delivered from a range of other locations (and on-line) across the borough.

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Timescales

- Public consultation launched **28 October 2021**
- Consultation will run for **12 weeks**
- Include face-to-face and virtual **drop-in sessions**
- Results of the consultation collated and **new EIA** created
- Recommendations for future service delivery to Cabinet for debate and decisions in **January or February 2022**