

Public Consultation into Library Savings proposals

Rationale for the Identification of County Council Funded Libraries

1. Feedback from the public consultation challenged the rationale for selecting 16 libraries to be funded based on the fact that collectively they deliver the majority of library business through book loans. Collectively these libraries are based in Market Towns and Shopping Centres.
2. The main points of challenge were in the area of visits where a small number of individual community libraries showed greater performance than a small number of shopping centre libraries based upon the 2012/13 out-turn data.
3. Leicestershire's libraries are grouped into 3 tiers:

Market Town Libraries: These are the largest libraries and are situated in the larger population areas. They offer the full range of library services. They are:

Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough, Market Harborough, Melton, Oadby, Wigston.

Shopping Centre libraries: These are situated in smaller population areas, but still with a defined centre such as a shopping centre. They are:

Ashby, Birstall, Blaby, Broughton Astley, Earl Shilton, Glenfield, Lutterworth, Shepshed, Syston

Community libraries: These are mainly in rural areas and locations with smaller populations. They are:

Anstey, Barrow upon Soar, Barwell, Bottesford, Braunstone Town, Burbage, Castle Donington, Cosby, Countesthorpe, Desford, East Goscote, Enderby, Fleckney, Glenhills, Great Glen, Groby, Hathern, Ibstock, Kegworth, Kibworth, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, Market Bosworth, Markfield, Measham, Mountsorrel, Narborough, Newbold Verdon, Quorn, Ratby, Rothley, Sapcote, Sileby, South Wigston, Stoney Stanton, Thurmaston

4. It should be noted that the outturn data for 2012/13 was affected by a reduction in opening hours implemented in that year. This would have impacted on performance data as library users adapted to the changes in hours. In order to establish a robust and accurate comparison, 2013/14 data has been included because by this a reasonable time period to expect a stabilisation of data.
5. Table 1 contains comparison performance data and financial information for the financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14. The terms 'highest' and 'lowest' correspond to the highest or lowest performing library (based on ranking) within that category of library.

Type		2012/13			2013/14		
		Community Libraries	Shopping Centre	Market Town	Community Libraries	Shopping Centre	Market Town
Total Annual Visits	Lowest	4,400	44,031	153,640	3,325	36,450	97,162
	Highest	48,133	140,613	348,117	31,325	108,659	255,660
Visits per hour open	Lowest	10	25	65	5	21	55
	Highest	48	80	142	36	62	108
Total annual loans	Lowest	6,396	55,785	153,608	5,971	50,175	102,792
	Highest	37,065	114,297	276,204	35,957	97,369	245,198
Loans per hour open	Lowest	14	32	65	12	29	55
	Highest	36	65	116	37	56	99
Total active Borrowers	Lowest	216	2,367	5,931	284	2,128	5,203
	Highest	1,541	4,587	10,517	1,443	4,182	9,710
*Cost per active borrower (total net cost per library divided by number of active borrowers)	Lowest	16.81	16.34	27.87	21.90	15.87	19.07
	Highest	77.89	48.11	56.15	71.28	40.50	39.66
**Cost per hour open (Total net cost per library divided by annual opening hours)	Lowest	25.48	42.82	92.03	20.25	36.98	67.88
	Highest	66.39	98.77	171.52	49.19	73.17	114.16

*Note: 2012/13 performance data correlated with 2014/15 (budget) as presented during the consultation

**Note 2012/14 performance data correlated with 2013/14 actual financial information as presented during the consultation period.

Table 1 Performance comparison between Market Town, Shopping Centre and Community Libraries Source: LCC management information

6. It can be seen for some measures, that the ranges of values overlap between some of the community libraries with some of the shopping centre libraries, and between the shopping centre libraries and market town libraries in both 2012/13 and 2013/14. For example, when looking at visits per hour open and loans per hour open in both 2012/13 and 2013/14 the highest performing community library shows greater visits per hour open than the lowest performing shopping centre library. Generally these will be down to specific activity in some libraries in those years that have impacted on performance.
7. Consideration must be given to specific circumstances in some of the Market Town and Shopping Centre libraries that will have impacted on data during 2013/14. As part of the 'using buildings better' services strategy, in 2013/14, there was significant capital investment which included investment in meeting/training rooms and

associated equipment which required the closure of some Market Town and Shopping Centre libraries for significant periods of time and contributed to the reduction in visits as well as reduction in opening hours. It should also be noted that due to the temporary nature of these works/closure periods, staff costs were still borne within the service.

8. In addition to paragraph 7 above, there was also a 12 month closure of Market Harborough Library for refurbishment (as part of the District Council's plans to improve the use of its headquarters). Whilst temporary measures were put in place over the year, any reduction in service availability will have an impact on both the statistical and financial information and this should be given due consideration when comparing year on year data.
9. Despite the above factors it is clear that the majority of library business continues to be delivered via Market Town and Shopping Centre libraries when the average use is considered. This is shown in Table 2

2012/13								
Type	Average Visits		Average Loans		Average Active borrowers		Average PC usage	
Market Town	256,933	69.86%	211,741	66.86%	8,321	66.51%	29,685	76.85%
Shopping Centre	89,745	24.40%	83,121	26.25%	3,251	25.99%	7,406	19.17%
Community Libraries	21,090	5.74%	21,828	6.89%	938	7.50%	1,538	3.98%

2013/14								
Type	Average Visits		Average Loans		Average Active borrowers		Average PC usage	
Market Town	195,456	67.19%	174,268	57.75%	7,324	62.55%	27,865	76.32%
Shopping Centre	60,607	20.84%	71,014	23.53%	2,956	25.25%	7,185	19.68%
Community Libraries	15,365	5.28%	20,869	6.92%	824	7.04%	1,463	4.01%

Table 2: Average performance across Market Town, Shopping Centre and Community Libraries
Source: LCC management information

10. In order to further test the rationale the impact on active borrowers has been considered.

Active borrowers

11. Active borrowers are those residents that choose to use library services that can easily be measured. This is done from data which shows the use that residents make of their library card when they transact with the library and covers the loan of books (including e-books) and booking of PC's. This is detailed in Table 3 overleaf:

Type	2012/13 Average Active Borrowers		2013/14 Average Active borrowers	
Market Town	8,321	66.51%	7,324	62.55%
Shopping Centre	3,251	25.99%	2,956	25.25%
Community Libraries	938	7.50%	824	7.04%

Table 3: Average Active Borrowers across Market Town, Shopping Centre and Community Libraries *Source: LCC management information*

12. It is the book lending service that residents significantly value above all other services. This is evidenced in the responses to the public consultation where 98% of respondents valued this element of the service a great deal or to some extent and 95% thought that it was the most important. For this reason, it is reasonable to propose that active borrowers and the impact upon them is the most significant factor when deciding which libraries should be supported when funding is being reduced.
13. For example, Mountsorrel library is an example of a higher performing community library in terms of visits and loans per hour open. It had the highest numbers of active borrowers from the smaller community libraries in 2012/13 with 1,541 borrowers. When considering active borrowers however it reaches fewer borrowers than the shopping centre library with the lowest number of active borrowers, Broughton Astley, which had 2,367 active borrowers in 2012/13.
14. The following tables show the implications for active borrowers of the current proposals and the alternatives suggested for deciding which libraries should be fully funded based upon the implications for active users.

active borrowers are served if annual loans, i.e. access to the book lending service are used to establish the 16 highest used libraries.

Conclusion

16. In a very difficult climate the County Council seeks to protect as many service users as it can when making decisions that involve reductions in available resources. The current proposal for LCC funded libraries protects the maximum number of active users.
17. It may be suggested that if data such as visits per hour open and loans per hour open are exclusively used, then a different configuration of libraries could be constructed to determine 16 libraries to be fully funded by the county council. Consideration should be given however to the exceptional circumstances outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 that impacted on some shopping centre and market town libraries during 2013/14.
18. When active borrowers and annual loans are considered in conjunction with average usage as detailed in paragraphs 10-13 the rationale for identifying the libraries proposed to be fully funded by the County Council remains as originally proposed.
19. This is further supported by the results from the consultation that shows that the core book lending and loan service is felt to be the most valued and important aspect of the service. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate that more active borrowers will be able to access the service through the originally proposed 16 libraries, than by different configurations based on criteria where the highest community libraries perform better than the lowest shopping centre libraries, e.g. average visits per hour and average loans per hour.

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