

Sharing Responsibility for Libraries: More than a Library

Kingston Library



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sharinglibraries

Milton Keynes Libraries



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Introduction

This report sets out the proposals for Milton Keynes Libraries in the context of the Council's budget proposals for 2015/16 to 2017/18. This includes the outcomes from an extensive three-month engagement programme on the future of the libraries and sets out a proposed way forward for Kingston Library.

Vision for the Future

Kingston Library is a vital part of the library network in Milton Keynes. It is a busy local library providing valuable services to the local community.

It is clear that the public value libraries and want to see them develop and grow through the 21st century to become community hubs serving as spaces for education, learning and events as well as somewhere where they can meet, attend activities and from where community groups can operate.

This is a challenge in today's financial climate. It is clear that there will have to be some changes to the way libraries operate for the future. This will mean using technology to allow people to access services for longer. Using the "open libraries" technology will enable this to be achieved and means that services like loaning books and accessing computers can be delivered without a staff presence. Volunteers will help to support this, so enabling a number of tasks and events to be delivered. Embracing this new technology will allow libraries to be open longer than they are at present.

The concept of a community hub is clear as a way forward. This can be delivered without a continual library staff presence and will allow use of the building to be maximised, enabling income to be generated through rental of space and the introduction of new services as opportunities arise.

The library is housed in a new building which allows it to meet current day demands. The community needs to embrace this and make best use of its facilities.

The current financial climate means that libraries have to look hard at the way income is generated. Rental of space will be the most successful way of generating income, but Kingston Library will continue to seek other forms of income through donations, sponsorship and events as well as looking at other ways of reducing costs such as energy reduction.

This vision will be delivered through a Delivery Plan which will look at the libraries overall as well as on an individual basis.

The key themes are:

- Development of "open libraries" – this will allow libraries to be open for longer hours while still reducing costs.
- Maintaining a flexible, professionally staffed library service.
- Developing the role of the library as a 'platform' for community and enterprise use and to enable others to organise and develop it.
- Supporting the development of Friends Groups at all libraries to help shape the use of libraries and develop fundraising initiatives.

- To continue to encourage the valuable role of volunteers in libraries providing support and training as required.
- To provide IT infrastructure, be it through Wi-Fi, PCs or technology, to manage libraries in a timely cost effective manner.
- Developing links with businesses, voluntary, public and education sectors to deliver services and share resources.
- To continue to work towards the development of a sustainable network of libraries that can share and develop services.
- To continue to develop strong partnerships with Town and Parish Councils to provide local services.
- To continue to review stock and space required to ensure that footfall is maintained and services provided meet the needs of local communities.

Key Messages from the Engagement Process

There was a limited attendance (7) at the engagement meeting at Kingston Library, but a much higher response to the online survey (42).

The key messages that emerged were:

- Very limited response from young people whose views may not be represented.
- More education and events wanted and these need to be publicised.
- The concept of a community hub was important.
- There was a need to establish a Friends Group.

Work Undertaken Following Engagement Process

During the engagement process a number of potential leads for the development of partnerships and possible users of the building were identified. Library staff have pursued these leads to investigate their viability.

This has included:

- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – Meetings have been held with CAB and there is an interest in renting the meeting pod.

Use of the Building

Maximising the Community Use of the Building

Kingston Library is the newest library in Milton Keynes and has been designed with modern day library usage in mind. The library is well used and there are two separate spaces and a meeting pod which all have regular bookings and are rented by a number of different organisations including Explore Learning and Arts for Health.

The community needs to be encouraged to come forward and make better use of the space in order for it to become the community hub that people are suggesting. This is particularly important in light of the fact that other meeting places in the locality appear to be heavily booked. One active lead is to link more with teenagers to perhaps use the space for gaming events.

Parish and Town Council Partnerships

The library has an established partnership with Monkston and Kents Hill Parish Council. They have contributed a £500 donation to the library and are regular users of the meeting pod. Further discussions will be held relating to the use and future of the library and how they might contribute.

Co-located Services

The new, modern library at Kingston lends itself to the co-location of services. Explore Learning provides a valuable community resource at the library in the provision of tutorial services and Arts for Health provides services supporting people with mental health issues.

Management and Operation of Libraries

Stock

As a brand new library with increasing usage and issues it is anticipated that Kingston Library will see no reductions to stock. In fact it is likely that an increase may be needed to satisfy the demand.

“Open Libraries”

Milton Keynes Libraries are being challenged to maintain services while reducing costs at the same time. This is being achieved through the introduction of new technology, known as “open libraries”, which would allow the library to operate extended opening times with no staff presence. The alternative is for additional hours to be provided either through funding from partners or through the community becoming more involved through volunteering.

This technology is being adopted by a number of UK Libraries, the nearest being in Peterborough. Through the use of CCTV, swipe card entry systems, automated lighting, self-service machines, PCs and Wi-Fi, customers can use the library without the need for staff to be present.

The proposals for operation under the “open libraries” system are:

- Library opening hours extended by 18 hours per week.
- Staffed hours maintained.
- Staffing reduced from 1.8 FTE to 1.56 FTE.
- Retention of opening hours on Sundays in “open libraries” mode.

Central Library will be the control centre for other service points when they are in “open libraries” mode.

The proposed new opening hours for Kingston Library are as follows:

	Current		From 1st April until "open libraries"	Proposed					
	Opening Hours			"open libraries"		Staffed		Total hours open	
Mon					13.00 – 17.00	4			4
Tues	10.00-18.00	8	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8
Weds					9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8
Thurs	11.00-17.30	6.5	10.00-17.00	7	17.00-20.00	3	11.00-17.00	6	9
Fri	10.00-17.30	7.5	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8
Sat	9.00-13.00	4	10.00-13.00	3	09.00 – 10.00 13.00 – 17.00	5	10.00-13.00	3	8
Sun	11.00 - 14.00	3			11.00 - 14.00	3			3
Total		30**		24		18		31**	48

*10.00 – 11.00 library only open for Children's Hour

** includes Children's Hour

Financial Issues

Income Generation

This has always been a key challenge for the libraries and was a key focus during the engagement. Legally the Council cannot charge for the loan of books. The reliance on fine income is self-defeating and comes at the same time as a hugely declining market in CD and DVD loans which means income generation is a major hurdle for the Council.

The engagement process highlighted many ideas for the use of library spaces and active measures are under way to market rooms for hire where there is a strong demand for this type of activity.

Room rentals from April through to November 2015 have generated under £13,000.

Room rental is not the only way of raising income, the following have already been planned or are in place across Milton Keynes Libraries:

- Charges for visits and provision of services for schools and nurseries.
- Introducing charges for events such as children's hour.

Fundraising, Sponsorship and Donations

Raising funds through sponsorship and donations was one of the key areas within the community engagement. Whilst people were quick to point out the potential for sponsorship, experience has shown that this can be a very challenging, time-consuming exercise with little or no reward.

The libraries will continue to be responsive to offers of help and donations.

Friends Groups are vital to help libraries raise income. This can be done through a wide range of activities including:

- fundraising events;
- obtaining sponsorship;
- supporting activities in libraries;
- delivering additional programmes of events;
- activities at local fetes and festivals.

Central Support Costs

Kingston Library is an important part of the library provision in Milton Keynes. As with any service there are shared central costs which are apportioned to each library.

These costs enable all library users to have access to the following:

- Access to nine library buildings and the mobile library which provide space and support infrastructure for people to work, study and research in our libraries.
- A professionally led library service across the Borough led by qualified librarians providing specialist and strategic support, frontline staff (daily staffed hours at each library), management and cover for sickness and leave.
- New books purchased and processed centrally before distribution to all libraries.
- Membership to South East Library Management System which allows access to 6 million items in addition to over a quarter of a million books and other items through Milton Keynes Libraries.
- Access to the Virtual Library. This allows renewals, reservations, online payments, room hire bookings and access to the full range of library facilities 24 hours a day.
- IT related costs including the maintenance and management of the Library Management System, public access to PCs and free Wi-Fi.
- Library development to promote and market the benefits of libraries through outreach activities and social media across all areas of Milton Keynes.
- Access to digital resources including eBooks, eAudio books and digital databases including Ancestry, business databases and online encyclopaedias.
- Management of a volunteer programme supporting council staff at all libraries including the Home Library Service and the development of “Friends” Groups in each of the nine library locations.
- Delivery of the School Library Service to Milton Keynes Primary Schools.

- Health & Safety relating to buildings, staff and customers.
- Cleaning, general maintenance and other building related services.
- HR and other staff related matters.

During the “Sharing Libraries” Review a comprehensive re-assessment of the service function and requirements of all libraries has been undertaken. This has resulted in further efficiencies and savings across the central costs of 35%. This saving is the equivalent of 8.3 FTE equivalent from central staff.

Making the Library More Energy Efficient

Kingston Library has been built with energy efficiency in mind and has a solar panelled roof making it the most energy efficient building in the library portfolio.

Publicity and Promotions

In the past, library promotions have included paper-based marketing with flyers, leaflets and posters distributed throughout the community and within libraries as well as press releases and regular online marketing through the council website and social media sites.

Statistics demonstrate that the future marketing strategy for libraries needs to embrace online promotional opportunities as these are increasingly being used. Visitors to the Council’s library website have increased by over 6% in the last year. Similarly, Facebook “likes” and Twitter followers have also increased steadily and posts are viewed over 40,000 times each month. Hits on Google pages for the libraries now reaches 60,000 visitors monthly.

However, the responsibility for promoting libraries does not rest with Milton Keynes Council alone. It is important that partners and communities play their part too by raising the profile of the libraries as a community space.

Staffing and Volunteers

Staffing

With the proposed changes in the operation of Kingston library and the introduction of the “open libraries” technology, the staffed hours will change from a current establishment of 1.8 FTE to 1.56 FTE.

Volunteers and Friends

The engagement process highlighted the use of volunteers and Friends of Libraries Groups to help paid staff and support a variety of functions within the library service. This is an area of increasing importance and the last library restructure in 2013 saw the appointment of a Library Volunteer Co-ordinator.

As of July 2015 there were 33 volunteers at Kingston library who provided 132 hours of their time per month. This significantly exceeded the target set, but there is still scope for more involvement and the recruitment campaign continues.

A priority has been set for the establishment of a Friends of Kingston Library Group. All the people who attended the engagement event and provided an email address were approached. Consequently, a meeting has taken place in the Kingston area for members to consider the formation of a constituted group.

Information Technology

The current IT infrastructure across Milton Keynes Libraries, which is used by both staff and customers, is based on old technology. Due to lack of investment over the years it is now not fit for purpose and is regularly failing. Current IT problems include:

- Existing IT platforms not designed or configured to be able to support new IT needs such as “open libraries” technology and RFID (Self Service).
- Changes in customer demands are not catered for. This includes the ability to print from Wi-Fi, compatibility issues, up to date software and slow connections on public PCs.
- Greater demands placed on the IT systems due to Milton Keynes Libraries internal needs and systems are limiting working practices.
- Outdated, slow and inadequate servers with old redundant equipment remaining in the server cabinets at each library.

In addition to this, the current IT platform was not designed to support the planned library building reconfigurations which would require changes to the IT infrastructure. This is likely to cause further issues.

Many of the services are delivered on a paid for basis. This provides a useful source of income, but customers need to receive value for money and the service needs to be current and reliable.

IT underpins all the work and operations of the library and without substantial investment in new IT equipment, support and regular upgrades, Milton Keynes Libraries will have difficulty functioning. This is likely to cause major operational issues in the future as libraries become increasingly reliant on IT.

A full review of the current IT infrastructure has started and will examine what IT service is required for the future. It is likely that any IT upgrade work will be costly and capital funding will need to be sought.

Conclusion

Milton Keynes Libraries are entering into a new era which will see them embrace technology and bring them to the forefront of communities as a resource and a service whilst still meeting the Council’s financial targets. To achieve this a Delivery Plan has been developed which will allow progress to be monitored.

Delivery Plan

Reference	Actions at Kingston Library									Completed by																																																																																																		
K1	Continue to support the strong and active team of volunteers supporting the Council staff operating at the library.									Ongoing																																																																																																		
K2	Develop and support a friends group at Kingston Library.									Ongoing																																																																																																		
K3	Procure a supplier for “open libraries” and open for use by 1/04/2016. Learning from this pilot this will then help inform the roll out at the other eight library buildings.									31/03/2016																																																																																																		
K4	Develop a stronger partnership with Broughton and MK Parish Council and Kent Hill, Monkston and Brinklow Parish Council in supporting the library (e.g.: developing a friends group, volunteers, programming, publicising activities and contributing funding).									Ongoing																																																																																																		
K5	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2"></th> <th colspan="2">Current</th> <th rowspan="2">From 1st April until “open libraries”</th> <th colspan="6">Proposed</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Opening Hours</th> <th colspan="2">“open libraries”</th> <th colspan="2">Staffed</th> <th>Total hours open</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mon</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>13.00 – 17.00</td> <td>4</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tues</td> <td>10.00-18.00</td> <td>8</td> <td>10.00-17.00</td> <td>7</td> <td>9.00-10.00</td> <td>1</td> <td>10.00-17.00</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Weds</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>9.00-10.00</td> <td>1</td> <td>10.00-17.00</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs</td> <td>11.00-17.30</td> <td>6.5</td> <td>10.00-17.00</td> <td>7</td> <td>17.00-20.00</td> <td>3</td> <td>11.00-17.00</td> <td>6</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fri</td> <td>10.00-17.30</td> <td>7.5</td> <td>10.00-17.00</td> <td>7</td> <td>9.00-10.00</td> <td>1</td> <td>10.00-17.00</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sat</td> <td>9.00-13.00</td> <td>4</td> <td>10.00-13.00</td> <td>3</td> <td>09.00 – 10.00 13.00 – 17.00</td> <td>5</td> <td>10.00-13.00</td> <td>3</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sun</td> <td>11.00 - 14.00</td> <td>3</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>11.00 - 14.00</td> <td>3</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td></td> <td>30**</td> <td></td> <td>24</td> <td></td> <td>18</td> <td></td> <td>31**</td> <td>48</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>											Current		From 1st April until “open libraries”	Proposed						Opening Hours		“open libraries”		Staffed		Total hours open	Mon					13.00 – 17.00	4			4	Tues	10.00-18.00	8	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8	Weds					9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8	Thurs	11.00-17.30	6.5	10.00-17.00	7	17.00-20.00	3	11.00-17.00	6	9	Fri	10.00-17.30	7.5	10.00-17.00	7	9.00-10.00	1	10.00-17.00	7	8	Sat	9.00-13.00	4	10.00-13.00	3	09.00 – 10.00 13.00 – 17.00	5	10.00-13.00	3	8	Sun	11.00 - 14.00	3			11.00 - 14.00	3			3	Total		30**		24		18		31**	48	
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