

# A LIBRARY STRATEGY FOR SUTTON 2015 TO 2019

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Library services provided in the London Borough of Sutton have been at the forefront of innovative and customer focused service for many years. Sutton was the first to offer Sunday opening, the first to use self-service technology and radio frequency identification technology for the management of library book stocks, ahead in its provision of free Wi-Fi, and a Beacon award winner for libraries as a community resource.

Suttons Library service consists of 9 libraries and a mobile library. We have 285,329 books in stock and our Libraries receive 1.5m annual visits. Resident satisfaction with the service is 89%.

The provision of a library service is statutory under the ***Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*** which specifies that a service should be “comprehensive and efficient”.

Over recent years the landscape for public libraries has been transformed by rapid developments in electronic media. We read, find out information, contribute to, publish and share content in a way that could never have been envisaged in 1964. The Library Service has to be able to react to this shift, not least in the way we offer a route into electronic content, especially to those who have limited or no access to the internet. The Library Service offers a safe and neutral space to read study or socialise. It collects community information, preserves the community’s memories through local studies and archives collections, and helps people navigate through the mass of information presented by the internet and other electronic media.

Over the past fifteen years there has been significant investment in Sutton’s library service. Five new libraries have opened, mostly located in multi use buildings - Worcester Park (2000), Phoenix Centre (2004), Circle (2010), Sutton Life Centre (2012) and Westcroft (2013).

The remaining libraries have all undergone refurbishment, with improved access and a reconfiguration of space which best meets the needs of a modern public library service. All libraries also have access to the internet via a network of over 140 public computers and free Wi-Fi.

However, the financial climate for Sutton is very different now: the Government’s deficit reduction strategy means councils have reduced and reducing budgets and substantial savings to find. The challenge is to continue to provide the best quality library service we can afford.

This Library Strategy sets out the way forward to retain the core of the service and make it sustainable for the future. The Strategy, and the operational framework that supports it, will be the driver for developing the service to ensure relevance in a digital world in a context of smaller budgets, increased partnerships, shared services and buildings and consortium working.

## FINANCIAL CONTEXT AND STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Sutton Council is facing a period of unprecedented budget reductions. The Council has to find savings of £72 million by 2019. Of this, £32 million has already been achieved through the Smarter Sutton Services Programme; a further £40 million has been identified for the next four years.

In July 2014, the Council started an engagement programme with local residents - Suttons Future- to allow local people to have their say about what their priorities are for future service provision.

Under the **1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act** the council is obliged to provide a “comprehensive and efficient service” for all individuals who live, work or study within the borough. The London Borough of Sutton currently delivers this through a network of 9 libraries and a mobile library.

Library Service key facts:

- Annual opening hours are 25,908
- Total book stock is 285,329
- Annual visits are 1.5 million
- Annual issues for books and other stock are 838,837
- 315,390 free hours of ICT hours are delivered annually through 142 public computers
- The service supports 224 housebound and disabled users
- In 2014 2000 children were involved the national Summer Reading Scheme supported by 20 young volunteers
- There are 41,000 active borrowers which is 22 percentage of the population
- The Library and Heritage Service budget is £4.469m
- The Library Service brought in £303,176 income in 2013/14

## KEY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN SUTTON

- At the time of the 2011 census, Sutton had a population of 190,000, which has increased by 4.7 per cent since 2001.
- Sutton’s birth rate is increasing with 12,800 persons aged 0 to 4 in the borough. The number of children and young people is forecast to increase by 16% from 2011 to 2019
- The population is also ageing with the highest number of persons in age categories 40 - 44 years and 45 - 49 years. The number of older people in Sutton (over 65) is expected to grow by 20% by 2019 to nearly 33,000.
- By 2019 there will be over 30,000 people in Sutton with a limiting health problem or disability. Nearly 16,000 will be over 65 which is around 50% of all adults over 65.
- Sutton overall has a lower unemployment rate than the population in London, which is 5.2 per cent and has a higher proportions of people who are employed, both full time and part time and a slightly lower proportion (by 0.2 per cent) of people that are self employed.

- There has been a shift in the employment pattern in Sutton as 43.3 per cent of the population is in full time employment, 13.3 per cent are employed part time and 11.4 per cent are self employed. 3.9 per cent of the population is unemployed.
- Sutton's population is 78.6 per cent 'white' which is a 12.8 per cent decrease since 2001. 11.6 per cent is 'Asian/Asian British', 4.8 per cent is 'Black/Black British' and 3.7 per cent is 'mixed'

## COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Council has a 4 year corporate plan in place that sets out its key priorities and outcomes. The Plan supports the Council's vision to build a community in Sutton in which all can take part and all can take pride and is framed around four key themes:

### AN OPEN COUNCIL

- Working collaboratively ensuring we involve and listen to residents
- Helping individuals and communities to work together and to help themselves

### A GREEN COUNCIL

- Making Sutton more attractive and sustainable to build on our reputation as a green borough

### A FAIR COUNCIL

- Building safe, strong and healthy communities
- Increasing economic growth and investment in Sutton making it a place of choice to live and work

### A SMART COUNCIL

- Transforming our ways of working to manage reduced budgets and increasing demand
- Developing an engaged, skilled and entrepreneurial workforce

## COMMUNITY HUBS PROJECT

The Council has agreed that it wishes to assess the potential to pilot and, if the benefits are sufficient, roll out community hubs in Sutton to improve local access to services, while reducing the number of buildings the Council operates from. Any future plans for libraries will need to be cognisant of the community hub ambitions. Plans would also need to align with the Council's digital strategy and 'new contract' with residents and businesses which would encourage and enable self support or self serve wherever possible.

## THE NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR LIBRARIES

Libraries are a visible symbol of community service provision, much valued by residents. They contribute to a number of strategic priorities, such as economic development, the skills agenda, health and wellbeing. The library service is also ideally suited to work in partnership with others to deliver these priorities.

Libraries are valuable assets, not only as community hubs and access points, but also as the providers of information, materials, digital services and a workforce where staff have the skills to navigate and interpret information. Libraries are places where everyone can mix freely and come together; they offer a safe and welcoming community space.

Libraries need to continue to demonstrate value for money in the current climate and in light of the Council's commissioning agenda. In its research document *The Library of the Future* Arts Council England has laid out four priorities for 21st century library services:

- Place the library as the **hub** of a community
- Make the most of **digital** technology and creative media
- Ensure that libraries are resilient and **sustainable**
- Deliver the right **skills** for those who work for libraries

## ACROSS THE COUNTRY THERE HAS BEEN A VARIED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE LIBRARY NETWORKS

These include:

- Co-locating libraries in leisure or health centres or placing other council services into an existing library building;
- Sharing across council boundaries to deliver services more efficiently e.g. stock buying and ICT consortia;
- Increasing the role of volunteers, including turning libraries over to community run services or using volunteers to enhance service provision through running events, activities and supporting informal learning;
- Commissioning services either through social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives or private companies or by commissioning from another public library authority;
- Reducing the size of the library network, concentrating on areas of deprivation and services to children, the elderly and disabled.

## LIBRARIES IN SUTTON

The Library Service in Sutton is provided through a network of 9 libraries located throughout the borough and one mobile. There is a full time equivalent staff of **64.3**. Sutton Central Library is by far the largest and operates over four floors. It has the largest book stock and operates as a resource and support for all other libraries. The most recent MORI poll (2013) shows a satisfaction rate for Libraries of 89%.

The branch library network is divided into two distinct groups, those libraries which are in standalone buildings and those in multi centres

Library in civic premises	Libraries in Standalone Buildings	Libraries in Multi Centres
Sutton Library	Wallington Library	Phoenix Library
	Worcester Park Library	Westcroft Library
	Cheam Library	Sutton Life Centre Library
	Circle Library	
	Beddington Library	

Libraries in multi centres are staffed by library staff but the buildings are managed by another operator. Generally the libraries in multi centres are smaller in floor space, open longer hours and share overheads.

The library service is extensively used across the Borough. There were almost 1.5 million visits to libraries during 2013/14. Sutton Library attracts users from across the Borough and from neighbouring authorities. It is open 7 days a week for 60 hours.

Wallington Library is the second largest library and is a well established resource in the town centre. The other standalone branch libraries at Cheam, Worcester Park and Circle, attract a local population (typically around a 2 mile radius) and are open for a minimum of 35 hours per week. Beddington is a small part time library with a low and diminishing usage and a small catchment area.

The branch library network is supported by a Mobile Library and a Homecare Library Service. The Homecare Service delivers to 244 residents who are unable to travel from their home to a local library due to ill health or disability. There is potential to increase this number significantly through partnership work with the Meals on Wheels Team and developing the volunteer programme.

## ALL LIBRARIES OFFER THE FOLLOWING AS CORE SERVICE

- Books
- Newspapers and magazines
- Computer and internet access through the public library computers
- Free Wi-Fi at all libraries
- Access to online services and resources
- Events and activities to support reading and literacy
- First point of contact for a range of council services including Freedom Pass renewal, Revenues and Benefits scanning, Blue Badge Applications.

The Archives and Local Studies Collection is based at Sutton Library. Many libraries are used for Councillor Surgeries, crime prevention officer advice sessions and police surgeries and are therefore well placed to be Community Hubs.

All libraries run an events programme, particularly focusing on promoting literacy and reading.

The **Library Strategy 2014 to 2019** has these key aims:

- Literacy: growing the readers of the future
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Narrowing the digital divide
- Creating a viable, sustainable and quality service within available budgets.

## LITERACY: GROWING READERS OF THE FUTURE

Public libraries serve an important function in literacy development, which in turn has a major impact on quality of life. Research shows the links between low literacy and crime, poor health choices, low educational attainment and unemployment. Recent reviews of child poverty have identified early language and literacy as building blocks for children's lives, helping to narrow the gap in the life chances experienced by children from poorer homes. (*Department for Education April 1011. A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tacking the causes of disadvantage and transforming families' lives*)

The development of literacy and reading form the core of the public library offer, and visiting libraries and library activities are generally viewed as enjoyable recreational activities by children and young people. This is important as both children's reading attainment and their enjoyment of reading has declined in recent years, yet research studies have shown positive links between enjoyment, learning and academic success.

## HOW WILL THE STRATEGY DELIVER THIS AIM?

### We will

- Undertake a detailed assessment of usage and need at each library, including age profile, visits, transactions, ICT usage.
- Increase space and appropriate book stock at libraries with a high proportion of families with young children.
- Assess the provision of adult stock with a view to reducing it in the light of growing use of the internet as an information resource.
- Support parents and carers by providing a range of literacy based activities such as story times for preschool children, Summer Reading Challenge and Bookstart.
- Support students and young people in their educational attainment by providing study space, access to books and IT.

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF AN AGEING POPULATION

The UK population is ageing and by 2019 the number of people over 65 in Sutton is expected to grow by 20% to 33,000. Libraries have a key role in supporting older adults who currently make up a significant percentage of library customers. As people's needs change, libraries can play an important role in signposting information, providing events and activities which allow people to remain active and healthy longer and a safe, free space where people meet and socialise.

The Homecare service is part of a network of services which allow older adults to remain in their own home, offer support and reduce social isolation. Reading groups and Friends' groups often thrive as their members are older and have the time to volunteer and support the library service.

## HOW WILL THE STRATEGY DELIVER THIS AIM?

### We will

- Continue to provide materials in a range of formats such as large print and audio books for those with visual impairment.
- Work in partnership with Adult Social Care, Public Health and other organisations to deliver support to older people, including the development of a dementia friendly service, the Information and Advice project and assisting with the delivery of the Care Act.
- Review the Library Homecare service to deliver a strong and resilient volunteer programme working in partnership with, for example, Meals on Wheels.
- Recruit more volunteers to assist with activities aimed at preventing social isolation and boosting confidence and self esteem.
- Identify space in libraries to deliver health and well being sessions, such as regular health checks, stop smoking stalls and clinics.
- Work in partnership to deliver a programme of talks and events promoting good mental health, supported by self help and mood enhancing collections.
- Develop sign posting and information resources to for people with mental health issues and age related conditions.
- Expand the volunteer programme providing computer training courses for people aged 50 plus, including developing modules which support access to key information and health sites for older people.

## NARROWING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital agenda is changing the way people create, share and access information. There is an increasing move away from desktop computers to smart devices, phones and tablets resulting in a need for Wi-Fi provision as well as fixed networks. E-books and E-magazines are growing in popularity and downloads for music and film have become commonplace. Not everyone has access to or is able to use online content. Libraries are natural centres for learning and the gateway to a wide range of resources. They provide free internet to all users and introductory sessions to using computers and online information for the over 50s. Public access PCs, provided in every library, support the Council's strategy to migrate customers to

more cost effective ways of accessing Council services. All libraries offer Freedom Pass renewals, support in revenue and benefits scanning, Blue Badge applications and helping people complete online forms.

Whilst the number of people who have never used the internet has declined sharply over the last few years, recent research from the Office of National Statistics estimates that 6.7million people have never used the internet. Over half these are self assessed as disabled under the Equality Act, 72% are over 65 and non users are mostly in the lower income brackets.

**HOW WILL THE STRATEGY DELIVER THIS AIM?**

**We will:**

- Redefine the role of library staff as digital champions to offer training in the use of IT and Smart devices.
- Expand the volunteer programme to deliver IT training to targeted groups and a wider audience.
- Join the London Library Consortium, upgrading and improving the Library Management System at a lower revenue cost.
- Reduce expenditure on hard copy books and extend the range of e-books and online subscriptions.
- Enhance the library catalogue, introducing interactive and personalised features such as book reviews, ratings, and discussion threads.
- Maintain and improve self service technology and Wi-Fi.

**ENSURE STOCK MEETS CHANGING NEEDS**

The impact of online booksellers such as Amazon on the availability of discounted books has had a huge impact on the book trade. It has also exacerbated the steady decline in borrowing from libraries nationally. Sutton Library service issue figures have decreased in line with national trends. Visitor figures however have shown a slight increase as customers continue to use libraries for a wide variety of reasons.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Visitor Numbers</b>	<b>Stock Issues</b>
2009	1,434,629	1,123,652
2010	1,484,976	1,103,716
2011	1,480,700	1,067,494
2012	1,480,788	973,812
2013	1,481,731	837,970

The ability to borrow books free of charge will remain a valued activity but the effects of future digitisation, particularly of material which will be free to download, will continue to have an impact on library issues.

Books in a range of formats, including Large Print, audio books and e-books extend access to people with disabilities or those who want to access their reading electronically. With reduced budgets, we will explore ways to achieve better value for money at the same time as maintaining a wide range of quality stock.

## HOW WILL THE STRATEGY DELIVER THIS AIM?

### **We will:**

- Join the Central Book Buying Consortium (CBC) to deliver better discounts and a wider range of stock.
- Adopt supplier selection, commissioning the library suppliers to deliver to our specification, releasing staff time to focus on key priorities.
- Re-profile spend to focus on materials for children, young people and older people.
- Re-assess the provision of adult non-fiction and reference materials, reflecting the impact of the internet as a largely free information resource.

This page is intentionally left blank