**PROGRESS UPDATE: COMMUNITY HUB OPENING HOURS AND
FUTURE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR GRAIN LIBRARY**

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   For the 2017-18 budget, Council on 23 February 2017 sought reductions of £94,000 in the Libraries budget. These were made up from general efficiencies (£20,000); the Thomas Aveling proposals (£36,000); the alignment of library and community hub opening hours (£23,000), and volunteer staffing of Grain Library (£14,700).

1.2   This note responds to Members' request for an update on the progress with two of those proposals.

1.3   **Impact on staff :**   Members will wish to note that no redundancies will result from any of the savings proposals. Vacancies have been held so that any member of staff affected by the proposals and losing contracted hours will be able to replace them, albeit possibly at a different library.

**2.   ALIGNMENT OF LIBRARY OPENING HOURS WITH CUSTOMER
CONTACT DESKS AT COMMUNITY HUBS**

2.1   In 2016 the Customer Contact desks at all Community Hubs were closed at 6.00pm as a budget saving measure in response to low levels of customer demand after that time. Libraries remained open until 7.00pm (not every night at all Hubs). This led to confusion and frustration for customers, able to transact some business but not receive the full Hub service. Gillingham and Rochester Hubs were open to 7.00pm five nights per week; Chatham and Strood for two nights a week.

2.2   The readjustment of library opening hours at Community Hubs has brought them in line with the closing time of Customer Contact services and solved this customer confusion issue. Library opening hours are varied according to public demand and other operational issues and have not been the subject of public consultation in the past.

2.3   The decision on aligning opening hours was also influenced by looking at library customer usage data. A sample for one month indicated that between 6-7pm

  •   the average number of books/DVD's issued for the four Hubs was 7.5 per building. This compares to the average of 33.6 items an hour across the four hubs, with a peak of 73 items (Gillingham, 12noon – 1.00, April 2017)
  •   the amount of computer use was only 2% of the overall use
  •   the visitor figures by hour can only be given for Gillingham (they have a system which records visits by the hour). This data tells us the average visitor figure for that hour was 18; the average figure for other hours in the day was between 60-75.

The service was clear that across its opening hours, closing between 6-7pm had least impact on residents. It is also confident that it provides an excellent 24/7 offer in terms of e-books to download, an excellent website to renew and reserve books, as well as access to online reference resources. Some 12% of business is now transacted on-line. This is a combination of online renewals, and eBook and eAudiobook loans.

2.4 A 7.00pm closure does remain at two branch libraries for one night per week: at Rainham (Tuesday evening) and Wigmore (Thursday evening). As these are not community hubs, the service has not received the same customer feedback about not being able to carry out all of the business that they wish to do; it is also recognised that both libraries are closed one day in the week, so these hours have been left as they are.

2.5 The 6.00pm closure at community hubs was implemented on Monday 24 April 2017, following a period of advertising the new closing time. There has been little customer reaction to this measure. There has been one formal complaint, and the service has responded to a number of Member enquiries.

3. **INVESTIGATION OF POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER LED SERVICE AT GRAIN LIBRARY**

3.1 Grain is the least well used of all of Medway's Libraries but the Council is clear it does not wish to withdraw library services from this community. Staff have made great effort with activities to increase usage but success has been limited. The use of trained and supported volunteers at Grain Library based within the Chapel building in a community partnership approach as an alternative to the current staffed provision has therefore been put forward as a new approach. It is not an approach that is seen as appropriate at any other location.

3.2 If this approach is successful it may enhance the opportunities for some residents and could even enable an increase in opening hours for the library. More intensive use of the building offers the opportunity to assist, for example, older residents looking to remain active and engaged in their community. No public consultation is proposed for Grain as this is a project to investigate if a volunteer led service can be put into place. The aim is that users will not experience a markedly different service.

3.3 This is a challenging project as volunteers are hard to come by, but the library service has a track record of working with its Friends and other volunteers. Volunteers would be trained to keep the library running and we are considering both phone and possibly other technology that would enable users to speak direct to trained Libraries staff on more complex queries. We would have a dedicated liaison officer who would keep in regular contact with the volunteers.

3.4 A role profile has been developed (see next page) so that potential volunteers can explore this opportunity. Local advertising of the volunteering opportunity has recently commenced.

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Medway Libraries Volunteer Role Profile

Role description	Library volunteer
Location	Grain Library

Duties	With guidance from library staff, provide a front facing service to library customers as part of a team of volunteers by:
	
	• Being responsible for opening and closing the library (to be confirmed)
	• Issuing and returning books and other stock
	• Using the library catalogue to help customers to find or reserve books
	• Joining new members
	• Assisting with any questions or basic enquiries that customers may have
	• Helping customers to use the self-service unit to issue, renew and return books and other library stock (take out if no self service unit)
	• Helping customers use public access computers and WiFi
	• Undertaking other selected library routines and procedures, eg
	   o Re-shelve and tidy books and other stock
	   o Help to maintain the stock by carrying out cleaning and repairs
	   o Help with library displays
	• Helping keeping the library safe and tidy
	• Meeting and greeting customers at events, promote the Library Service by chatting to customers and giving directions (eg to toilets)
	• Assisting with library events and clearing up afterwards
	• Undertaking any training necessary to the role profile

Desirable skills	• Be supportive of the Library Service in making its events and activities accessible and welcoming • Be reliable and dependable • Enjoy engaging with people • Be confident and patient with people • Be happy to work as part of a team with staff and partners • Be able to use own initiative • Be confident and experienced with IT (general computer use, web searching) • Have an awareness of health and hygiene • Have good basic craft skills (eg cutting out, tracing) • Have a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity
Timetable	To be agreed with Senior Library Assistant in charge, **however**, a library volunteer must be prepared to

	commit to a regular time, eg a three or four hour session a week or fortnight
Reporting/supervision	Senior Library Assistant
Library link person	Tba
Training & induction	The supervisor or a designated member of staff will carry out an induction to the library / hub including health & safety, fire procedures, attendance, punctuality, absences and staff facilities.
Induction pack	The volunteer will receive an induction pack which includes the welcome letter, code of conduct, information on the use of visual display equipment
Statistics	The library staff will record the number of hours volunteered each month
Review date	April 2018