

Diversity impact assessment Appendix 4

TITLE <i>Name/description of the issue being assessed</i>	<p>This is a further revised DIA for the proposed closure of Thomas Aveling Library. It was originally updated in the light of the work undertaken to produce a consultation document (April 2017). It has now been further updated following public consultation and the analysis of those results.</p>
DATE <i>Date the DIA is completed</i>	<p>26 June 2017</p>
LEAD OFFICER <i>Name and title of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.</i>	<p>Chris White, Head of Libraries, Business Support and Community Hubs Duncan Mead, Library Services Manager</p>

1 Summary description of the proposed change

- *What is the change to policy/service/new project that is being proposed?*
- *How does it compare with the current situation?*

Following a review of budget options, and as a part of the overall Budget of the Council for 2017-18, the Council had indicated that its preferred option for the future is to close the public library at Thomas Aveling secondary school as it is not possible to provide the full range of library services and activities with the restricted opening hours.

The final decision will be taken at the meeting of the Cabinet on 11 July. They will also be considering any views expressed by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 July who will be reviewing the results of public consultation.

Background

Thomas Aveling Library is open to the public from 3-6pm each weekday afternoon and is also open on a Saturday from 10am-4pm.

During school hours the library only operates as a school library exclusively for the pupils of Thomas Aveling School. The school library service will not be affected by this proposed change.

The Library provides the following regular events:

- Baby, Bounce and Rhyme every Wednesday
- Pop in and Play every Saturday
- Teatime Story time every Thursday

2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

- *Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.*
- *Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile*

Summary

The key factor in the council's considerations on the future of the library at Thomas Aveling has been the constraints arising from the fixed opening hours and the position at the rear of the school site, making it very difficult to create a library that can offer the full experience that is on offer at other local branch libraries, and is an essential resource for the community.

The Thomas Aveling public consultation document set out a range of data that was also used to arrive at the council's preferred option to close Thomas Aveling public library. It also illustrated its poor performance when compared to other libraries.

Performance

Four key indicators of success have provided the main statistical data that indicates that Thomas Aveling is not performing well and is not meeting the needs of the local community :

- On issues of books and DVDs, Thomas Aveling came 15th out of 16 Libraries for issues in 2016-17, a worse performance than in 2015-16.
- On visits to Libraries, performance in 2016-17 was up on 2015-16, although we believe that this figure is skewed by the after school use that pupils make of the library.
- On enquires, Thomas Aveling only sits above Grain library in terms of the number of enquiries answered
- On events and activities, Thomas Aveling had the poorest attendance in 2015-16 (when Twydall library was in temporary accommodation for six months), and had moved just above Grain in 2016-17.

Profile of users

The consultation document also profiled 910 customers who borrowed items from Thomas Aveling between January 2016 and February 2017. This indicated that they also borrowed many more books from other libraries, particularly from Chatham, Rochester and Strood.

This data also confirmed that use of the library is very heavily influenced by young people – 30% of users are Thomas Aveling school pupils and a further 29% are of early years or primary school age. The service believes that the school pupils use the library for homework and as a safe place to wait to be collected after school. Whilst this boosts the 'visits' indicator there is no increase in issues, and it would normally be expected to observe the two to rise together.

The service also knows that usage drops dramatically during school holidays.

e.g. in October 2016 the average number of daily visitors was 153, for the October half term this figure reduced to 29 and during August 2016, in the school holidays, the average number of daily visits was 36. Saturday is commonly a very busy day at libraries, however for Thomas Aveling the footfall can be 50% of the weekday footfall.

Demographics

Demographic information relating to gender, age and ethnicity was provided from Library service records for registered users (i.e. those that first joined at Thomas Aveling) and who have used a Medway library in the last two years. Two population comparisons were made, one of all registered users (wherever they live in Medway) and another for registered users who live near the library (1km radius). Both sets of data indicate the same trends :

- Female users are over-represented compared to the population, whilst males are under-represented
- 0-18 year olds are over-represented compared to the population
- All other age groups including those over 65, are under-represented
- Black and minority ethnic users constitute a modestly higher proportion of users compared to the population

Attendance at events

The Library Service advertises and provides a range of events at this building, however the take up has been low. Outside of Grain library, Thomas Aveling has the lowest event attendance of Medway Libraries. At the regular weekly events average attendance for the following three activities is shown :

- Baby, Bounce and Rhyme every Wednesday - average attendance 4-5 children
- Pop in and Play every Saturday - average 5 people
- Teatime Story time every Thursday - average attendance 3 people

Opening hours and site layout

Analysis of attendance patterns has indicated that the most popular times for libraries to be open are in the morning and early afternoon. Thomas Aveling is not able to open its doors prior to 3.00pm, school finishing time. The location of the library at the rear of the school site does not encourage adults to come on site; older people in particular mention this as a deterrent especially during the winter months.

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3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to :

- *Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
- *Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
- *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?*

(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)

Protected characteristic groups	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	X	x	
Disabilty			
Gender reassignment			
Marriage/civil partnership			
Pregnancy/maternity			
Race	x		
Religion/belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation			
Other (eg low income groups)	x		

With the strong use by young people, any proposals for change need to focus on this group. With the surprisingly low sue by older people, it is flagged that there is an opportunity here to advance equality by increasing the use of library services by this broad age group.

4 Summary of the likely impacts

- *Who will be affected?*
- *How will they be affected?*

This updated DIA (26.6.17) also reflects on the findings from the public consultation

The report on the findings of the Thomas Aveling Community Library Consultation tells us that 151 people responded to the questionnaire; 87% were against closure, which was also the overriding view expressed at the

three public consultation drop-in sessions. Forty people attended three public consultation meetings. The issues that they were concerned about are set out in the Findings report and they are each commented upon in the covering committee report.

The impact on reading, especially for young people (as had already been flagged in the earlier DIA) is raised as a concern by users and non-users. The costs of travel and parking were raised as barriers to using other library facilities, and the earlier DIA had flagged at section 3 that low income groups could potentially be a further disadvantaged group, as they may not be able to make use of alternative facilities as frequently because of the travel costs.

The consultation document data had set out that 910 people had used Thomas Aveling library to borrow something in the year from January 2016 to February 2017. Thirty per cent (273) of this group are Thomas Aveling pupils and it is regarded that the impact on this group will be very modest as the school library will continue.

A further 29% of users (264) are young children of early years or primary school age. This is a key target age group for the Libraries service as the value to learning is well known if reading can be established as a regular and enjoyable activity. Mitigations are aimed at responding to this age group.

Adult borrowers (210) and other teenagers (57) will also be affected in that they would have to travel further to use another library should closure go ahead, but we know that of all the books that the 910 borrowed only 40% were from Thomas Aveling, suggesting that good use is already being made of alternative libraries by many customers.

The service was surprised that only 66 users were aged over 60. Members of this age group are often more regular users of libraries; the service believe that better marketing could lead to a rise in older readers in the locality of Thomas Aveling which would be a positive impact. This would apply to fit and healthy people aged 60+ who can travel to other locations, and to those who have some access difficulties and may be able to be supported through the home library service and the service provided to residential and care homes.

The user profile informed the service that Thomas Aveling borrowers of Black and Minority Ethnic origin, were modestly over represented compared to the local population. We do not know much more about the background to this group (are they settled BME people with a strong library habit, or more recently settled people with a high educational component to their use ?) The service had hoped to gain more information about this group from consultation, and although there were responses from this group, the reasons for that higher use have unfortunately not become more apparent. All of the other mitigations that are outlined below will apply equally to this

group of users and additional needs that may come to light can if necessary be addressed.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

- *Are there alternative providers?*
- *What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?*
- *Can demand for services be managed differently?*

In order to draw comment from survey respondents, the consultation document set out four proposals that could form the elements of alternative provision to mitigate the closure of Thomas Aveling library were that to go ahead. :

- Visit a community hub. Chatham, Rochester and Strood are nearest and as 'community hubs' provide good opening hours, facilities and events
- Provide a stop from the Mobile Library – that includes books for children and adults
- Market the on-line offer of the library service to mitigate the travel that would be required
- Seek to contact older residents, care homes and residential homes about services as they are so under-represented amongst the current user base

Following the analysis of the survey findings, those four elements continue to be the key mitigations. Generic provision that applies to all age groups are as follows :

- Make use of a community hub (or other branch library)
The Library Service has 15 other libraries in total so there is a good range of alternative libraries where a visit is required or desired. For Chatham, Rochester and Strood the consultation appendix indicated travel times to these venues as follows : 10-12 minutes by car; 15-26 minutes by bus; 34-50 minutes by foot.
- Use the mobile library
The mobile library provides a service to both adults and children commensurate with a small branch library. The report to the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee has indicated that a fortnightly mobile stop on a Thursday afternoon can be quickly made available, and that there is some flexibility to trial the location and timing of that stop.

- Use online services

Consultation responses have indicated that current Thomas Aveling users are making only modest use of online services, but towards a third have indicated a willingness to use them. Through these facilities, the library service is not just confined to physical buildings as it has this '24/7' presence, and this will be further advertised to both users and non-users :

- website provides for book catalogue search and loan renewal
- eBooks and eAudiobooks download
- a range of electronic information resources

Evidence shows that use by all library users of these electronic services has increased and now sits at 12.6 % of all library loans; it is a growing and very accessible service.

The concerns expressed at the cost of private or public transport and at car parking are accepted as potential constraints for those residents and users who currently walk to the library or make a short trip by car. Mitigation here is seen as coming in several ways. First, there is a reasonable expectation that less regular visits can take place. These can then be supplemented by use of the mobile library service and online services.

Young people who use the library service now and attend Thomas Aveling School will continue to have access to the school library during the day. It will be noted that this group constituted 30% (273) of the 910 group who had borrowed an item between January 2016 and February 2017. This is seen to be a reasonable mitigation for this important group.

Younger users of the library and those not students at Thomas Aveling will be able to utilise the mitigations outlined above.

For the small number of families with young children making use of the regular events, particular effort will be made to contact them and set out the alternative libraries, their range of events and how to travel to them. The events at the Community Hubs are well attended, vibrant and fun and would add considerably to the socialisation and development of babies and toddlers. As free events it is felt that they are well worth the travel.

The analysis of existing users showed up a relatively small group of 60+ users. It is felt that there is an opportunity to increase the use of the library service to this age group. For the general older population that will come from further marketing of the service. The Outreach and Partnership team will also make contact with care homes, residential homes and through contacts with community groups, seek to establish demand for either the home library service or for the book boxes provided to homes.

6 Action plan

- *Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence*

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Report to Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DM	6.7.17
Report to Cabinet	DM	11.7.17
In the light of decisions further revise DIA if necessary	DM	July/Aug 17

7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- *to proceed with the change, implementing action plan if appropriate*
- *consider alternatives*
- *gather further evidence*

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

Due to the constraints on improving the service due to the fixed opening hours, the current site limitations, and the low levels of use of the current service, and recognising the alternative service offers that can be provided, the officer recommendation to Cabinet is to proceed with the proposed closure.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that:

- *the recommendation can be implemented*
- *sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned*
- *the Action Plan will be incorporated into service plan and monitored*

Assistant Director

Date

26.6.17

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment

RCC: phone 2443 email: annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk
 C&A: (Children's Social Care) contact your normal P&I contact
 C&A (all other areas): phone 1481 email: paddy.cahill@medway.gov.uk
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