

Appendix B



CROYDON

**Library service review
Phase 3 consultation findings report**

Croydon Council

Activist Group

v1.0 17 September 2024

This report was produced on behalf of Croydon Council by Activist Group.

Report details

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Version number v1.0

Date 17 September 2024

Revisions v1.0 - final version – 17 September 2024



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Executive summary

1. The consultation reached a significant number of people across the borough and the rate of engagement compares well to similar consultations on changes to public libraries both previously in Croydon and in other local authorities. Inevitably, the consultation engaged mainly those currently using libraries, and engagement with a number of groups who may be most affected by the proposals in a number of communities, was lower, including some from global majority communities, children and young people and those without access to the internet. The impact on particular groups was further analysed through the EQIA and in additional engagement during the summer.
2. Current library users are strongly supportive of the library service and a large number of consultation participants reject the Council's rationale for the proposed closures on a variety of grounds, principally that the previous reduction in hours has partly caused the service weaknesses identified in the 31 January 2024 report. Previous campaigns to oppose library closures, supported by the current administration, were frequently mentioned.
3. A number of participants suggested the analysis of performance at several libraries within the rationale for the proposals was flawed.
4. Understandably, users of the four libraries proposed for closure are the most negative about all aspects of the proposals. While users of those libraries where opening hours are to be extended are more positive about the benefits to them, there is considerable solidarity with users of libraries proposed for closure.
5. The survey received 3,614 responses. There was a clear majority which felt the overall impact of the proposals would be negative (66%). Among users of libraries proposed for closure 97% of respondents felt the overall impact would be negative. Among users of proposed library hubs 48% said the impact would be negative as opposed to 43% positive. Among users of proposed community hubs the equivalent figures were 48% negative and 46% positive.
6. Compared to the overall number of active users registered at each library users of libraries proposed for closure were over-represented in the survey responses. When weighted by the number of active users at each library, responses were more evenly balanced, with a small majority (52%) which said the overall impact was negative.
7. There is a clear divergence between those who prefer the convenience of being within easy walking distance of a library and those who would prioritise longer opening hours at fewer sites with an expanded offer. A large number of current users of libraries proposed for closure would prefer continued part-time opening to closures which release resources to improve the library offer at other sites, even with the mitigations proposed.

8. Longer opening hours were extremely popular with many respondents, particularly those who use or could use the libraries where this is proposed (with the caveat that a large number of participants do not want this to be at the expense of closing other libraries). The most cited or sought-after benefits of longer opening hours included a larger programme of activities for children and adults, and safe, quiet space for work or study at more convenient times.
9. There was evidence of considerable uncertainty around the definition of the proposed model including the distinction between 'library hubs' and 'community hubs', the extent to which longer opening hours will be staffed or enabled by Open+, and scepticism about what 'outreach' will amount to and how feasible it will be to find suitable locations in the communities affected by closures.
10. There is also considerable cynicism about how the proposals will be implemented, particularly the proposed mitigations for library closures, with the experience of the previous round of changes cited as evidence.
11. There is considerable positivity among respondents about the benefits of self-service access (Open+). While a small but significant proportion of users say they would never use a library when it is not staffed, a larger proportion of respondents who haven't used it previously would be prepared to try it in the future. Responses from users of Selsdon and Norbury where it has been trialled indicates much higher levels of satisfaction.
12. Among those living in the catchment area of the four libraries proposed for closure who took part in the consultation, there was almost universal opposition to closures and a number of key concerns expressed about using other libraries, including accessibility without a car, parking, safety in Central Croydon and Coulsdon, and the impact on particular groups who would not be able to travel. These varied across the four libraries but the main groups cited everywhere were children, working parents, particularly those with small children, the disabled, the isolated elderly, and residents in particular estates and among particular communities from the global majority.
13. A large number of responses suggested alternatives to the closure proposals as they currently stand. These included: revisiting the library budget; generating additional income for the library service through commercial partnerships, lettings and fundraising; maintaining the current part-time opening hours; investigating community-managed models, encouraging more volunteering to support library capacity.
14. Encouraging more volunteering was one of the most frequently cited alternatives suggested to avoid library closures, with many participants criticising previous or current efforts by the council to engage volunteers in libraries. However, discussions between Council officers and a local community and voluntary sector organisation suggest that volunteering in Croydon is at an all-time low since the pandemic and has yet to recover.

1. Introduction

Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings from the formal consultation between 8th February – 19th April 2024 for the Croydon library service transformation project.

Background to the report

- 1.2 In this report, we describe the consultation methodology, scope of the consultation activities undertaken by Croydon Council, and our findings. The formal consultation activities were completed from 8th February to 19th April 2024, by both Croydon Council and in partnership, or with support, from Activist Group, regularly reporting to a joint project team and Executive Board, led by Croydon Council.
- 1.3 **The analysis of the issues raised by the detailed consultation feedback set out in this document is undertaken in the main review report (see appendix A) and in the review of closure options report (see appendix C). In relation to the libraries proposed for closure, the points are also addressed further in the EQIA document (see appendix D).**

Summary of each chapter/section

- 1.4 This report is broken down into the following sections:
- 1.5 **Section 1 – Introduction.**
- 1.6 **Section 2 - Background to the consultation:** This section provides an overview of the report and the previous phases of the project, and a list of the various individuals and organisations who were reached or responded during the consultation.
- 1.7 **Section 3 – Consultation methodology:** We detail the consultation methods that have been used during this phase of the project and the outputs from the consultation.
- 1.8 **Section 4 - Feedback on the current service:** The consultation did not ask in-depth questions about user satisfaction, but did provide opportunities for people to comment on the current offer in the context of the new proposals.
- 1.9 **Section 5 – Feedback on the overall proposals:** The consultation findings about people’s general response to the overall package of proposals.
- 1.10 **Section 6 - Feedback on library hub proposals:** A summary of people’s responses to the proposal to create six new ‘library hubs’ with extended hours including Saturdays.
- 1.11 **Section 7 - Feedback on community hub proposals:** A summary of people’s responses to the proposal to create three ‘community hubs’ including libraries, run in partnership with other council and community services.

- 1.12 **Section 8 - Feedback on the proposed closure of four libraries:** A summary of people's responses to the proposed closure of four libraries and the proposed mitigations including a new outreach service.
- 1.13 **Annex i – full list of consultation activities.**
- 1.14 **Annex ii – The Library Campaign consultation response.**
- 1.15 **Annex iii - consultation survey questionnaire.**

2. Background to the consultation

About this section

- 2.1 In this section, we summarise the findings from the previous 2021 consultation as background, set out what was being consulted on in 2024, and describe the consultation methods that have been used during this phase of the project.

The purpose of consultation

- 2.2 Formal public consultation must take place in advance of implementing proposals which make significant changes to how local services are delivered. Furthermore, the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service is a statutory requirement under the 1964 Public Libraries Act. Councils must also ensure that proposals are consistent with equalities duties.
- 2.3 Croydon Council has proposed changes to the public library service which require statutory consultation.
- 2.4 Changes were implemented following a previous round of consultation in 2021 under which the public library budget was reduced by £500,000. Library hours were reduced alongside planned mitigations of self-service access (Open+) and more volunteering.
- 2.5 In January 2024 Croydon Council's Cabinet took note of a report commissioned from Activist which analysed current performance, reviewed the previous rounds of consultation, and carried out community engagement to gather feedback on the impact of the reduction in opening hours implemented in 2022. It highlighted failings in the current service and concluding that the mitigations for reduced opening hours had not been implemented as planned, leading to a greater reduction in actual opening hours than envisaged, and reported widespread unhappiness among users about the current service, despite the good work of staff. The most recent performance data is analysed in appendix A.
- 2.6 The January 2024 report is available [here](#).
- 2.7 Below we summarise the key findings from the two phases of consultation which preceded these changes.

Findings from previous consultation

Summary of engagement findings from phases 1-2

- 2.8 The two tables below show our key findings from the March 2021 and July 2021 consultations (as summarised in our previous Phase 1-2 'Appendix E - Engagement findings so far' document):

Table E4: Previous public consultation in March 2021 (Phase 1) – our key findings

- Residents taking part highlighted that although many did have access to the internet from home that they were aware that other local residents did not have internet access at home and that **the library service helped to bridge the digital divide.**
- The four **most important library services** to respondents to the survey were: **browsing and borrowing books; Rhymetimes/children’s activities; Space to work or research and Using computers.**
- The three **most important things that respondents reported as missing from the library service** were: **Resources** (books, newspapers) (‘Improvements to quality book stock; more books’); **Activities** (‘Improved and additional activities for all ages’), and **Opening Hours** (‘Lack of evening & weekend opening hours a barrier’).
- Further feedback indicates the **additional thoughts that participants have about the things they feel are missing from the library service** including: **more books; access to refreshments; longer opening hours/outside of normal working patterns; improved promotion of events and activities; modern and welcoming spaces; improved furniture, and contactless/card payment.**
- Participants in the consultation said that **the following would make libraries more relevant to them: Opening their local libraries post-COVID, more comfortable modern spaces, better resources including books, more digital resources, a café, better local promotion and more activities.**
- On the specific issue of **opening hours:** 137 respondents said **opening hours pre-Covid were not suited to their needs or prevented them from using Croydon libraries,** and suggested they **would like longer opening hours and additional open days.**

Table E5: Previous public consultation in July 2021 (Phase 2) – our key findings

- The headline consultation findings from both phases, including the quantity of responses indicating **the strength of local resident feeling,** should continue to be recognised by the Council in any future options proposed for the library service.
- In response to the Option 1 proposal (**reduce library hours by 21%): 56% agreed, or strongly agreed; 37% disagreed, or strongly disagreed.**
- In response to the Option 2 proposal (**outsource the management of all 13 libraries): 17% agreed, or strongly agreed; 70% disagreed, or strongly disagreed.**
- In response to the Option 3 (**five community run libraries and reduced opening hours for eight libraries**) proposal: 25% agreed, or strongly agreed; **58% disagreed, or strongly disagreed.**
- There were a number of **recurring themes** that were noted as part of the consultation findings. It was indicated that the Council would incorporate these into the library service’s ‘new operating model to improve services’:
 - ‘Better **publicity about opening hours and activities.**
 - **Call on resident associations and other community networks for support.**

- **Digital services support sessions** for use of online resources.
- **Volunteering** to support the libraries.
- There were a number of resident concerns noted as part of the consultation findings, including:
 - The importance of ensuring that residents understood the supporting information.
 - Concerns that library closures during COVID lockdown were permanent closures.
 - Concerns that local libraries would close. Libraries were recognised by residents as being ‘important for wellbeing’; ‘a lifeline’; ‘respite’, and ‘brings community together’.
- The Equalities Impact Assessment identifies that specific user groups (**especially families with young children; adults without digital access; unemployed people; disabled people, seniors, and school children**) are **likely to be disproportionately affected** by any changes to Croydon’s library service offer.

The proposals for consultation February to April 2024

Summary of consultation proposals

- 2.9 Public consultation on the proposals for Croydon’s library service began on Thursday 8th February running until Friday 19th April 2024 (10 weeks in total).
- 2.10 As outlined on the Council’s consultation website, the proposals being consulted upon were as follows:
- “Six **'library hubs'** (**Central, Ashburton, Thornton Heath, Norbury, Selsdon and Coulsdon**) are proposed to be open five to six days a week, including Saturdays, and will deliver an extensive offer of books, wifi, PCs, study spaces and events. These libraries have all proved to be well-used, accessible buildings that meet local needs. Future investment in these sites is recommended to improve the facilities and extend the opening times and services available.
 - To make the improvements proposed, **four library buildings; Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, and Shirley** are **proposed to be closed**. This proposal is based on analysis of the buildings including visitor numbers, size and condition of the buildings, the size and needs of the communities they serve and running costs.
 - Activist’s research found three areas — **New Addington, Purley and South Norwood** — need library services, but low visitor numbers suggest the current set-up isn’t working. The council is proposing to introduce **'community hubs'** in these areas, where a library would be available alongside other services such as family and adult education services and community partnerships.
 - Other library services – such as **the home library service and the extensive digital offer**, including e-books and magazines, online learning and training resources – are set **to continue and be improved as part of the future service.**”

- 2.11 As outlined in the previous Phase 1-2 report, this round of formal consultation on future proposals has been essential in order to canvass Croydon residents widely, particularly those under-represented in previous consultations, especially those likely to be most affected by any proposals.

What wasn't being consulted on (the options discounted)

- 2.12 Due to the service failures that had been identified, it was agreed that the previous option (part-time opening) would not be consulted on during this phase. Other options were also assessed and rejected at this stage, including alternative delivery models, outsourcing and community management which had been rejected in the July 2021 consultation, and increasing the library budget (see appendix A).

3. Consultation methodology

Key Lines of Enquiry and the scope of engagement

- 3.1 The programme of consultation was underpinned by a set of Key Lines of Enquiry (or KLOEs). Together with the Council’s project team, we identified and agreed the important themes to explore during the consultation.
- 3.2 We also agreed the preferred consultation activities for addressing each KLOE. We also assessed how each KLOE and activity would provide us with direct (first hand experiential) or indirect (opinion based, perception) evidence in relation to the proposals.

Table E1: our key lines of enquiry

| Key lines of enquiry |
|---|
| 1. What will be the impact? |
| What would be the impact of extending opening hours for 'Library Hubs' and 'Community Hubs'? |
| What will be the impact of closures for each community affected? |
| What will be the specific impacts on people with protected characteristics? |
| Any relevant new data available since the report was drafted? |
| Which needs/groups are not currently being met/reached? |
| 2. To what extent do people support/accept the rationale for the new proposals? |
| Do people understand/accept that the Council's financial position limits options to improve the service? |
| To what extent do people support the concentration of services to improve opening hours etc? |
| What other improvements in the offer at library hubs would people support? |
| How positive/negative do people feel about developing 3 sites as 'community hubs'? |
| What mix of services would best serve the needs of those using the proposed 3 'community hubs'? |
| Are there community partners who would be interested in taking over existing buildings? |
| How would people like to make full use buildings which would be open 5 days a week including on Saturday? |
| How might the community hub model differ in each area - likely partners, site, co-location model? |
| 3. What mitigations can be put in place for those affected by closures? |
| What support do people need to access library services? How do we reach people who aren't currently using library services? |
| What tools are available to ensure outreach is effective? |
| What has worked elsewhere? (e.g. Models of community partnership which have been successful) |

Summary details of engagement activities

- 3.3 Consultation on the proposals comprised ten engagement activities which are summarised below.

Table 3.1: Summary of engagement activities, with descriptions

| Ref | Activity | Description |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 0 | Online briefing | An initial online briefing to launch the consultation, hosted by Cabinet member of Culture and Communities, Cllr Stranack, to present the proposals |
| 1 | Public meetings | Structured public meetings held near or at the four Croydon libraries proposed for closure. Open to all. Hosted by Members/Officers. |
| 2 | Public drop-in sessions | Informal public discussions, offering opportunities for more informal unstructured conversation, held at all Croydon library sites or nearby buildings. Open to all. Hosted by Members/Officers. |
| 3 | Workshops – internal | Small group briefings with key Council staff, including Union and volunteer representatives. |
| 4 | Workshops – external | Workshops with key Council partners, community groups, Friends groups and representative groups from the Croydon community. Hosted and facilitated by Council Officers with preparatory support from Activist |
| 5 | Briefings – internal | Small group briefings with key Council staff, including Union and volunteer representatives. |
| 6 | Briefings – external | Small group briefings with external Council and library partners, local community representatives and members of the public. |
| 7 | Community events – local engagement | Attendance by key Council officers at pre-arranged community events, or outreach opportunities, across a number of external locations across Croydon. These included engagement with children and young people via HAF camps, school sessions and youth bus, and on-street outreach, as well as care and community group visits. |
| 8 | Petitions | 6 petitions were submitted by the date of the closure of formal consultation, coordinated by local community groups, sharing their views on the proposals. Additionally, a seventh petition from users of Shirley library was submitted after the closure of the consultation, which has also been taken into account. |
| 9 | Consultation email | Emails submitted by members of the public and other interested parties to the Croydon Council consultation email address setup specifically for receiving feedback or asking questions about the consultation and proposals. In addition the Library Campaign, the national charity which campaigns for public libraries, submitted an email response to the consultation (2000 words). |

Consultation findings – June 2024

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| 10 | Survey | <p>A public survey, designed by Activist and Croydon’s project team, hosted by on the Council’s consultation platform, Get Involved. The public were invited to share their thoughts on the proposals (see Annex ii for survey questionnaire).</p> <p>The survey was designed to take no more than 15 minutes. The survey was widely publicised via the Council’s communication channels and in each library. The survey was launched on Thursday 8th February 2024 and was closed on Friday 19th April 2024.</p> <p>Paper copies of the survey were available (from 13 February date).</p> |
|----|--------|---|

3.4 For a full list of all engagement activities completed in chronological order, please see Annex i of this report.

Summary of consultation outputs

3.5 Below we have listed the number participants to each consultation method. In total we estimate the volume of participation to be over 8,000 individual actions. Six petitions, all opposing the proposals attracted 5,504 signatures. A seventh petition from the Norbury Residents Association made detailed comments on the proposals, including how it would like Norbury library to be developed.

Table 3.2: Summary of consultation outputs

| Consultation method | Outputs from consultation |
|----------------------------|---|
| Online launch briefing | 90 participants |
| Public meetings | 304 participants (150; 4; 100; 50) |
| Drop-in sessions | 687 participants (2; 60; 200; 30; 22; 29; 10; 8; 10; 20; 3; 26; 46; 25; 35; 6; 30; 32; 20; 48; 25) |
| Internal workshops | 13 participants (13) |
| External partner workshops | 6 participants (6) |
| Internal briefings | 6 participants (6) |
| External briefings | 93 participants (50; 43) |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Attendance at local events | 452 participants (8; 100; 23; 112; 30; 51; 34; 16; 20; 12; 22; 16; 4; 4) |
| Consultation Email | 147 emails were received (some respondents sent multiple emails). Replies were sent to all individuals. 2 other consultation responses were email directly. |

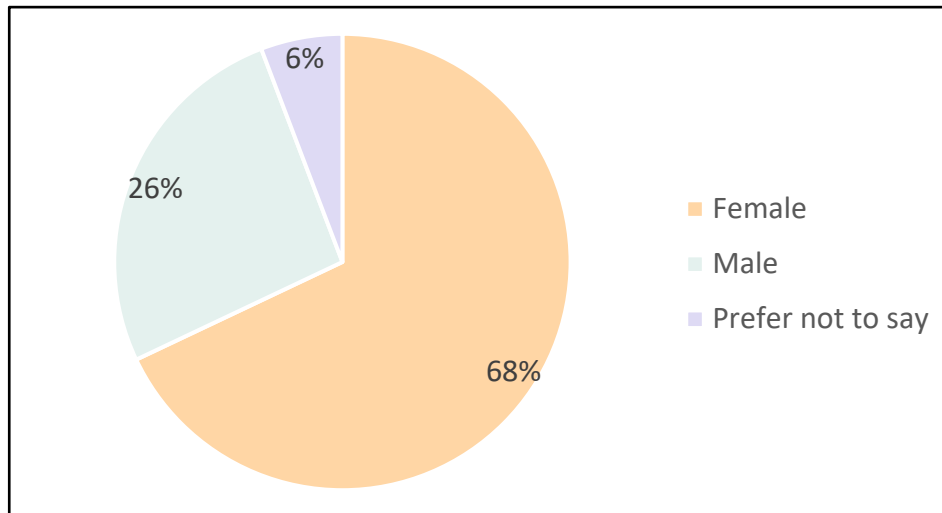
The survey

- 3.6 The public survey asked people a short number of questions about their current use of public libraries. It asked multiple choice questions to elicit responses to how the proposals would affect their ability to access public library services, as well as specific questions directed at those people primarily using those libraries proposed for closure. It provided three main free text questions which asked people for further feedback on the proposals and their ideas about alternatives. Tailored questions using ‘Skip logic’ were used to gain particular insight from different library users, including non-users and those primarily using the three groups of libraries within the proposals, those proposed for closure and those proposed to have extended hours as library hubs or community hubs.
- 3.7 The completion rate for the survey was high with a low drop-out rate. However, a handful of participants complained in free-text boxes and via other channels including the consultation email that the survey was biased or did not provide enough space for responses.
- 3.8 The survey questionnaire is attached in full at Annex ii of this report.
- 3.9 The survey captured 3,614 responses (online, and paper copies received and then manually entered by Council officers). There were peaks of engagement with the survey on 9th, 17th and 19th Feb and the largest peak on 1st March, reflecting peaks of face-to-face engagement at public meetings. Although the survey completion rate was good, high rates of neutral or ‘don’t know’ responses to a few questions may indicate lack of knowledge or sufficient clarity about aspects of the proposals or the intended outcomes.
- 3.10 It is important to consider the potential impact of the proposed changes on all Croydon residents, from all demographic backgrounds and range of engagement with the library service. However, looking at the profile of survey respondents we observe several differences in response rates by demographic profile and library usage.
- 3.11 The responses are heavily weighted towards:
- Frequent and regular users of the library service.
 - Users of some of the libraries proposed for closure.
 - People of white ethnicities.
 - Women

3.12 Under-represented groups include:

- Users of some libraries proposed as ‘library hubs’, particularly Central.
- Non-users of the library service.
- People from non-white ethnic backgrounds.
- Children and Young people.
- Men

Figure 3.1: Gender profile of survey respondents



3.13 These disparities in response rates are typical for public library consultation surveys. Furthermore, it is not surprising that users of libraries proposed for closure are more motivated to participate than users of other libraries or non-users. However, these figures do indicate that the impact on some groups most affected by the proposals will not be captured wholly through the survey.

3.14 The survey was aimed primarily at those aged over 16. For children and young people, and other under-represented groups in the responses, a number of other channels were used to gain the perspective of these groups.

3.15 Survey respondents who said they visited a Croydon Library were asked which library was their primary site to visit. The top three visited were Sanderstead (18%), Bradmore Green (14%) and Central (13%).

3.16 The table below compares the survey response rate to this question about primary library use, with the library service’s performance data for each library, by the number of active users, visits and book issues.

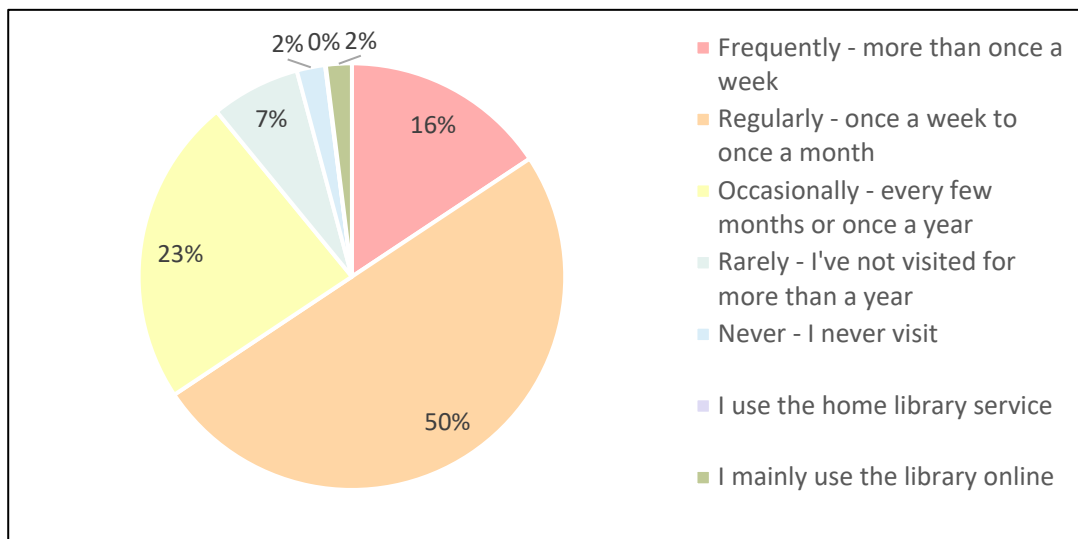
Table 3.3: Survey response rate compared with library performance data

| Primary library visited | Survey response ¹ | Performance Statistics | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------|--------|
| | | Active users | Visits | Issues |
| Ashburton | 5% | 5% | 7% | 10% |
| Bradmore Green | 14% | 2% | 4% | 3% |
| Broad Green | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% |
| Central | 13% | 52% | 49% | 33% |
| Coulsdon | 7% | 4% | 5% | 7% |
| New Addington | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Norbury | 4% | 6% | 4% | 6% |
| Purley | 5% | 4% | 3% | 6% |
| Sanderstead | 18% | 3% | 3% | 7% |
| Selsdon | 7% | 7% | 11% | 14% |
| Shirley | 7% | 2% | 2% | 3% |
| South Norwood | 12% | 5% | 2% | 4% |
| Thornton Heath | 4% | 8% | 5% | 6% |

3.17 Respondents were also much more likely to be frequent users of the library service, again understandable as those actively using the libraries were more likely to be engaged with proposals for the service. 50% of respondents said they visited a library in Croydon more than once a week. Only a small proportion of people who never use the library (2%) or haven't used it for over a year (7%, defined as 'rarely') responded. However, taken together these two groups give some insight into people who might be attracted to use libraries in the future.

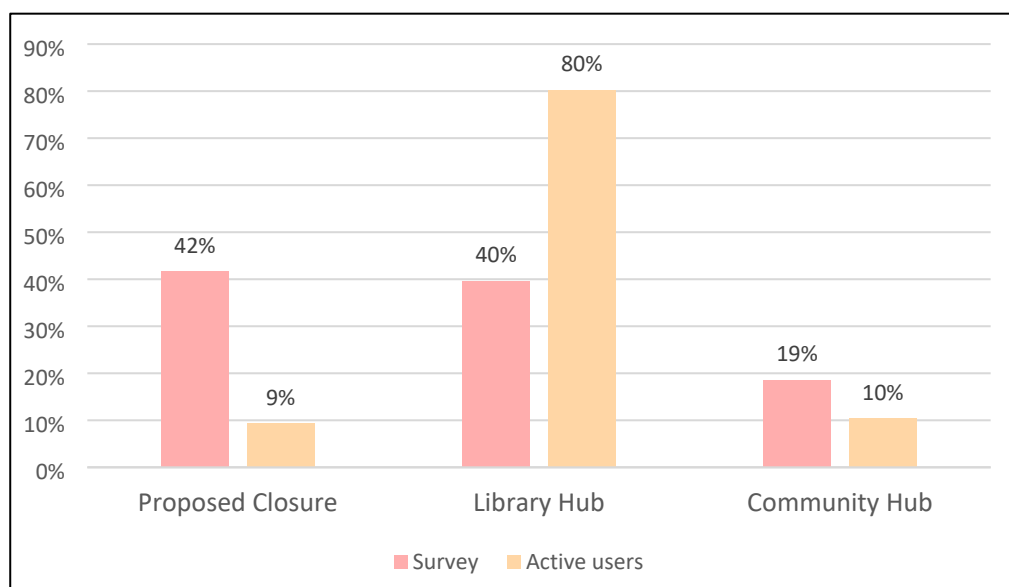
¹ Of the total responses from current users of the library service who indicated which library was their main access point for the library service (this excludes those who did not answer this question, or said they mainly use the online library, Home Library service users and those who said they never use a library).

Figure 3.2: How often do you visit a library in Croydon?²



- 3.18 There were no significant demographic differences in the response rate between visitors to different libraries.
- 3.19 Again, given the potential impact on library users at the four sites proposed for closure it is not surprising that these are over-represented in the survey compared to the user base of Croydon libraries overall. Users of proposed 'library hubs' were under-represented.
- 3.20 Library usage rates have been impacted by previous reductions in the service budget and opening hours, as well as the pandemic closures, and we have used the library performance metrics to understand how well we have reached different groups who may be impacted by the proposals.

Figure 3.3: Respondents by typology of libraries within the proposals (3,177 responses)



² Total responses - 3,579

- 3.21 Among respondents who said they were library users, there were only small differences in their frequency of use between those whose primary library affiliation (the library they visit most often) was either proposed for closure, or proposed as a new library hub or community hub.

Table 3.4: Frequency of library use by library type within the proposals (3,177 responses)

| Frequency of library use: | All | Proposed closure | Library Hub | Community Hub |
|--|-----|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Frequently - more than once a week | 18% | 18% | 17% | 18% |
| Regularly - once a week to once a month | 56% | 60% | 55% | 51% |
| Occasionally - every few months or once a year | 26% | 22% | 28% | 32% |

Approach to analysis including significance

- 3.22 In our analysis in the following sections, we have not sought to evaluate or ‘weight’ people’s perceptions or opinions, but we have drawn out those that we think highlight a key theme or shared viewpoint effectively. We have drawn out those views that were particularly common but have also included examples of significant or interesting ‘minority’ views that should be heard. At the end of each section, we have also highlighted our key findings.
- 3.23 Each section sets out the main responses from relevant questions in the survey and any significant differences in these responses between libraries and between different groups of people.
- 3.24 We also present a broad range of qualitative responses from all the consultation channels under headings drawn from each of our Key Lines of Enquiry. These include what people have said in public meetings, via the consultation email and in the free text responses within the survey. Sometimes, these are identified by the library at which they were said if in the context of a public meeting, (*indicated by italics*). Other sources are referenced following the text.

4. What people have said about the current library service

Introduction

- 4.1 In this section, we summarise what participants have said during the consultation about the current library service.

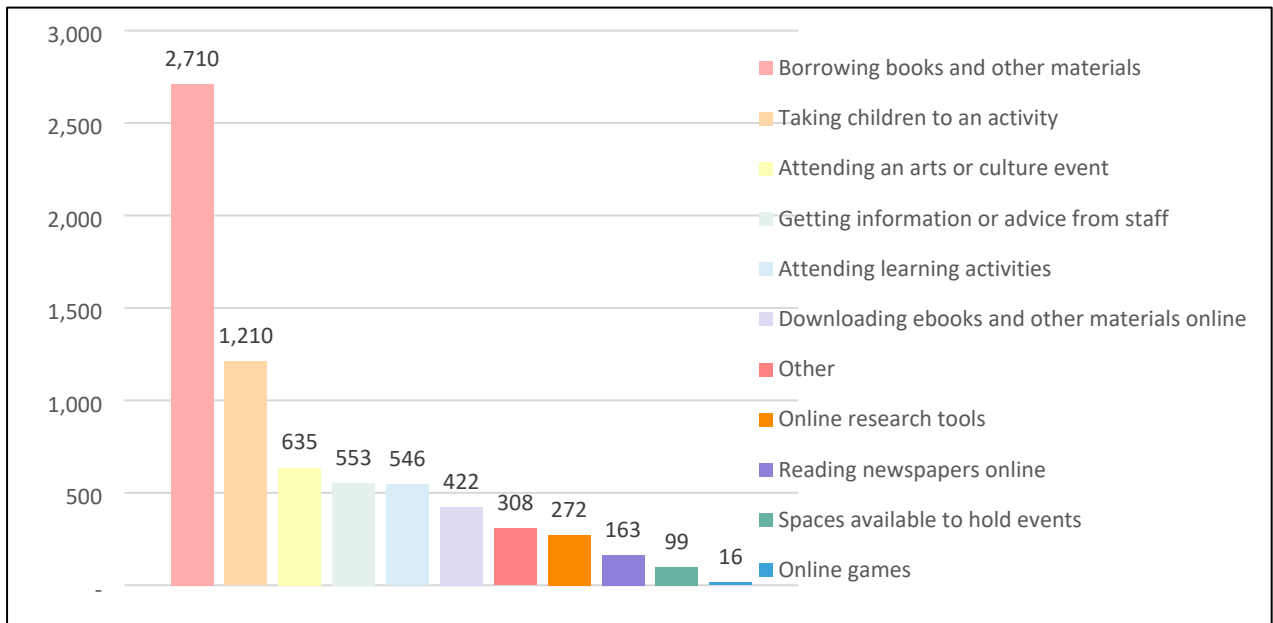
Feedback on the current library service

- 4.2 From the range of consultation channels the following key themes emerge:
- 4.3 **Strong support for the library service, each individual library and a general feeling they are valued local assets doing a great job:** The overwhelming majority of respondents were supportive of the library service as a whole and felt it was offering a good service, though a large number of participants had individual criticisms or suggestions to make. Individual comments included:
- *Central*: “The staff are great in Croydon”.
 - *Thornton Heath*: “Libraries are important spaces, I don’t need a card I can just go in there and sit”.
 - *Selsdon*: “Borrowbox is great”; “It’s nice here – quiet place to study is important, the school library is busy”.
 - *New Addington*: “It’s where I go to talk to people”.
 - *Purley*: “Important to have a library in your area”.
 - *South Norwood*: “Helps with isolation. Good connections made through that”.
 - *Shirley*: “(The) staff here are wonderful”.
 - *Bradmore Green*: “For me personally, I feel it fulfils my social needs... It is beautifully organised and the staff, and I hope some are here tonight, are exceptional”.
- 4.4 Although the survey did not seek to measure user satisfaction in depth, a number of questions explored how people were currently using the service and their motivations.

What they currently use

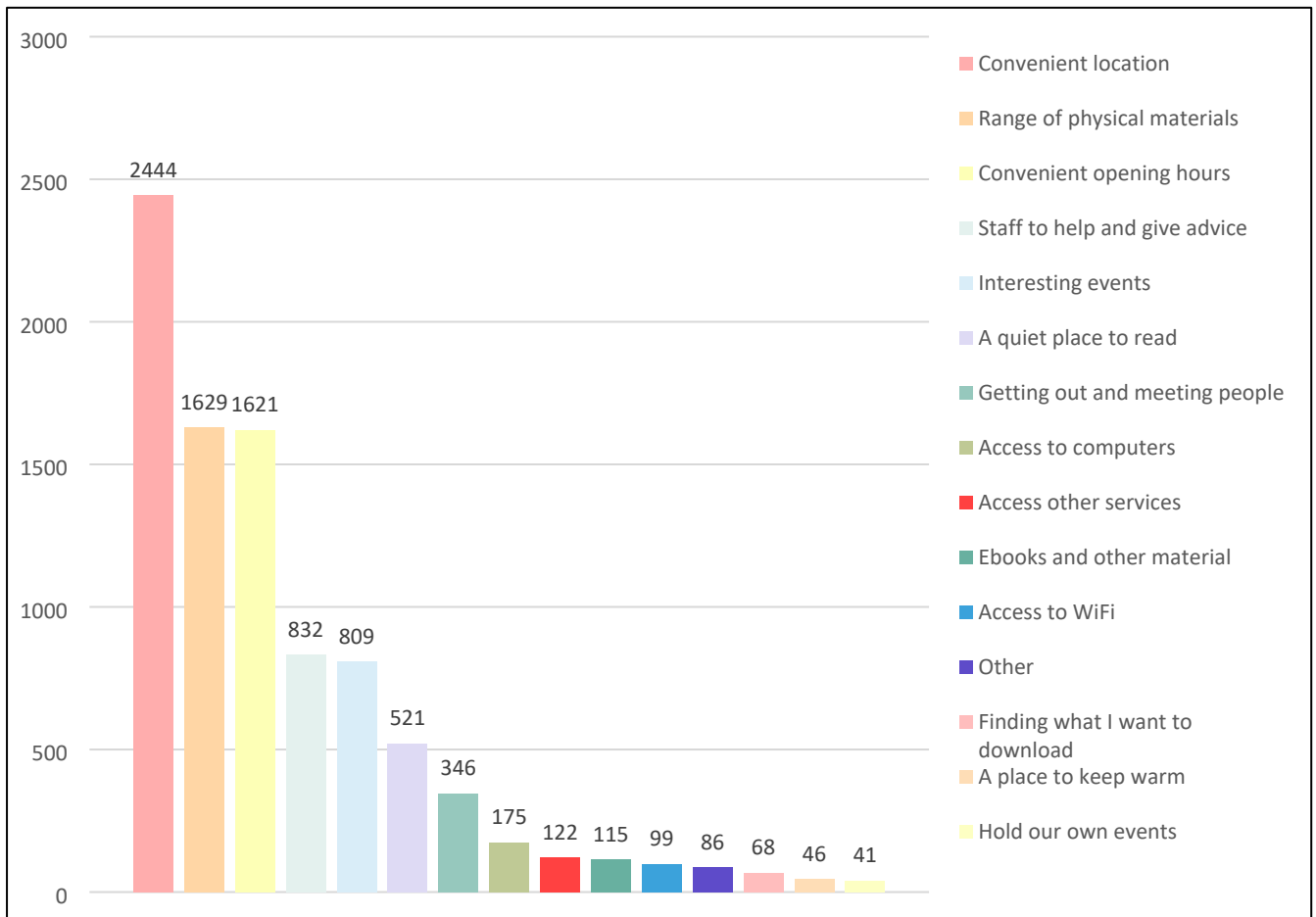
- 4.5 Among survey respondents who were library users, the most popular services were ‘Borrowing books and reading materials’, ‘Taking children to an activity’ and ‘Attending an arts or cultural event’.

Figure 4.1: Most popular library services among survey respondents (3,178 responses)



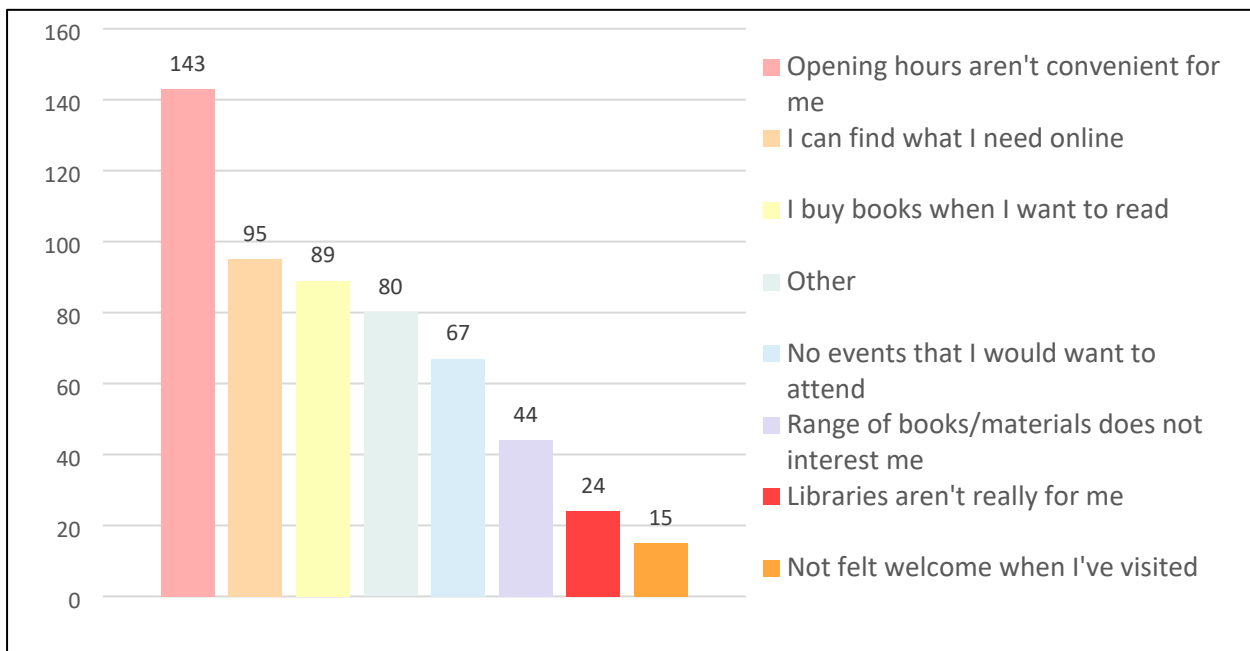
4.6 The key motivations for visiting libraries among survey respondents were ‘convenient location’, ‘a good range of physical materials to borrow’, and ‘convenient opening hours’.

Figure 4.2: Key motivations for visiting Croydon libraries (3,179 responses)



4.7 Non-users of Croydon’s libraries (defined as those who responded they never visit a library or rarely visit, more than a year ago) were also asked the reasons for not visiting. Of 318 responses, the most common reasons were ‘opening hours aren’t convenient for me’, ‘I can find what I need online’ and ‘I buy books when I want to read’.

Figure 4.3: Key reasons for not visiting libraries in Croydon (318 responses)



4.8 Among those who gave information under ‘other, please specify’, further detail about opening times was the most common response:

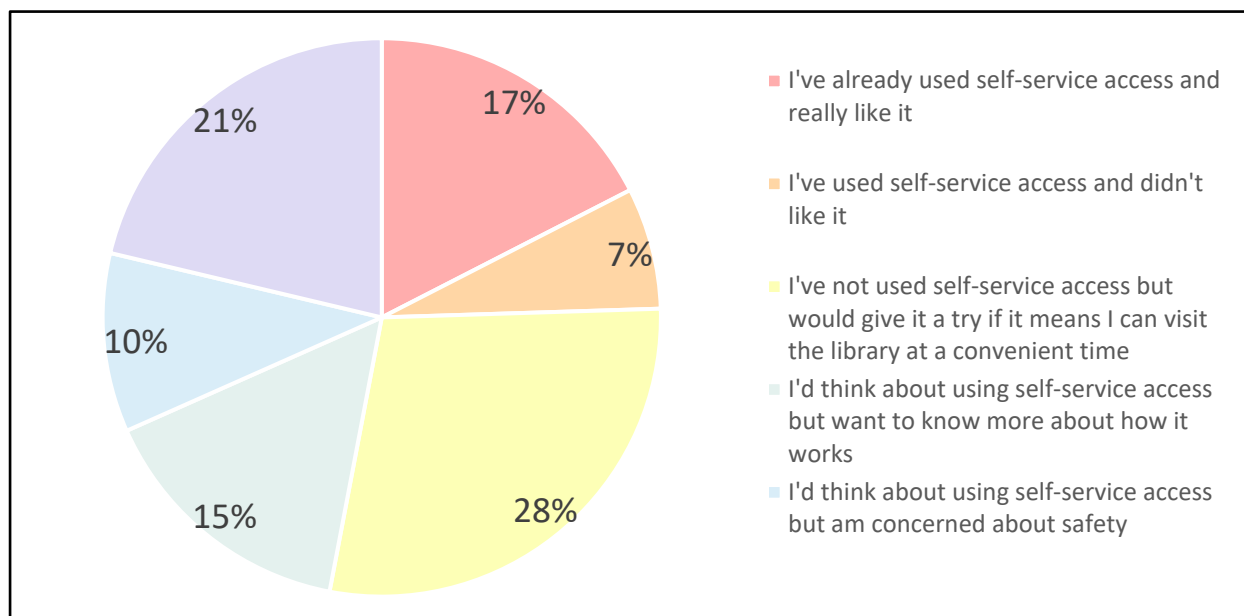
- ‘I never know when it is going to be open - it is rarely open and times seem to change frequently.’
- ‘I work full time and libraries are closed at weekends and after 5pm.’
- ‘I used to visit the library twice a week with my son in Purley for Rhyme time and to read books. However, there isn't much activities going on anymore and the opening times are awful.’

Use of and views on self-service access to libraries

4.9 Self-service access, known as Open+, has been trialled at two libraries in Croydon, Norbury and Selsdon, since 2023. Within the proposals, the extension of opening hours at nine libraries would partly be enabled through additional self-service access time. The survey therefore asked about people’s experience to date of self-service access, and how they felt about using it.

4.10 21% of respondents said they would never use a library that was unstaffed, and 7% said they had tried self-service access and did not like it. Conversely, 17% said they had used self-service access and really liked it. 54% of respondents had not used self-service access but were open to using it in the future.

Figure 4.4: Which of the following statements about self-service access do you most agree with? (3,551 responses)



- 4.11 Users of libraries proposed for closure were significantly less positive about using Open+, and more resistant to using it in the future, than users of proposed library hubs or community hubs.
- 4.12 Users of Norbury and Selsdon library, where the technology has been trialled, are significantly more positive about its use, with more than twice the number of respondents saying they had used it and enjoyed it, compared to the overall responses. A similar proportion of respondents at Norbury and Selsdon compared to the total responses said they had used it and didn't like it. This suggests that over time, whilst some users may never choose to use Open+, the concerns of a significant number of people can be addressed.
- 4.13 From qualitative responses to the use of self-service access across the range of consultation channels, a number of positive and negative themes emerged. As well as concerns about safety and a preference among a significant minority of current users for staffed premises, the negative impact on some groups was highlighted, and concerns about when access would be enabled by Open+ and when staffing was essential.
- 'Children under 16... Staffing on Saturdays essential' [Norbury Residents Association petition]
 - 'I absolutely hate the self service at Selsdon, please staff it for longer instead.' [survey free text response]
 - 'At the Open Access sessions the toilets need to be made available, which I believe they are not at present.' [survey free text response]
 - 'I have understood the need to reduce library opening hours and have felt very positively about the self service opening hours. It is easy to use and get access to the library. I would like easier access to the self service opening hours online.' [survey free text response]

Table 4.1: Survey responses from users of Norbury and Selsdon libraries to using Open+ (3,551 responses)

| Survey response | Total responses | Norbury | Selsdon |
|--|-----------------|---------|---------|
| I've already used self-service access and really liked it | 17% | 35% | 37% |
| I've used self-service access and didn't like it | 7% | 7% | 8% |
| I've not used self-service access but would give it a try if it means I can visit at a convenient time | 28% | 28% | 27% |
| I'd think about using self-service access but want to know more about how it works | 15% | 12% | 10% |
| I'd think about using self-service access but am concerned about safety | 10% | 13% | 5% |
| I would never visit a library outside of staffed hours | 21% | 5% | 12% |
| Number of responses | 3,551 | 126 | 230 |

Do people understand/accept that the Council's financial position limits the options available to improve the service?

4.14 Consultation feedback suggests there are mixed views about the relationship between the Council's financial position and the library proposals ranging from anger, to resignation, to pleas to re-examine priorities to fund all existing libraries:

- 'I think it is very short sighted to close Bradmore Green Library. It is clearly used by the community and represents value for money for the Council. I think it is unfair that our services are impacted because of a lack of central government funding.' [Survey free text response]
- 'It's not a proposal to extend, it's a restoration to a service close to that which we had before. I'd prefer to see a proper investment in this facility.' [Survey free text response]
- 'I think it unfair to lose 4 libraries. You should be enhancing and extending all libraries in Croydon.' (Survey free text response)
- 'The option to increase the library budget should have been included as part of the consultation. I accept that the Council would have to find this money from other Council spending, but the main reason that the service isn't working as well as it might is because it is chronically underfunded with Croydon spending less on its libraries than anywhere else in London. The Council should work across all departments and with health colleagues, using part of their budgets to develop libraries as Community Hubs.' (Consultation Email response)
- 'the proposals as they stand seem well-considered and in the current economic climate, we are lucky to have as many libraries as we do and that they are still free to use.' (Consultation Email response)

- ‘Don’t make this change and start making other cuts.’ (Survey free text)

Overall feedback on the previous changes to opening hours

4.15 Consultation feedback is consistent with the feedback in the Phase 1/2 report that library users are very negative about the impact of the reduction in opening hours in 2022. Many respondents also cited the reduction in opening hours as a driver for the lower usage which was cited as evidence of poor performance in formulating the proposals under consultation. Individual comments included

- “Reducing the opening hours was unhelpful and has no doubt reduced the number of people using the library but since Sanderstead has a significant number of older folk, this is an important resource.” (Consultation Email response)
- “We just fought tooth & nail 3 years ago... to save this much-loved library and now we are having to do this all over again!? And now that your party is in charge in Croydon, all of a sudden, the exact thing you were campaigning for in March 2021, is now in jeopardy again...!” (Consultation Email response)
- *Central*: “Coulsdon and Purley are both shut on the same weekday – who put together the timetable? That should not happen”.
- *Thornton Heath*: “it’s difficult to remember which days it’s open”; “the hours are so limited”.

Key issues to consider from consultation

4.16 In the table below, we have summarised our key findings from this section:

Table 4.2: Feedback on the current service – our key findings

| |
|--|
| <p>What they currently think about the service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There is very strong support for the library service, each individual library and a general feeling they are valued local assets doing a great job, Notwithstanding this, many people have criticisms about previous cuts to the library service, and individuals concerns about the level and standard of service across the network. <p>What they currently use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Borrowing books, children’s activities and cultural events are the most popular services, but many respondents said that the ability to use the offer is hampered by the current opening hours.• A plurality of survey respondents are cautious but open to using self-service access, and evidence from those libraries where it is available suggest that the concerns of many people can be addressed.• People mainly using the online library are generally positive about it but many respondents had criticisms about accessibility and current technical issues. <p>Views on the financial drivers for the proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are mixed views about the relationship between the Council’s finances and the current proposals. Many users are critical of previous decisions to cut opening hours and the political position of the current administration. A large number of people do not support closing libraries in order to extend hours elsewhere and would prefer priorities and alternatives to be re-examined. <p>Feedback on the previous changes, ie the reduction in opening hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overwhelmingly, participants are critical of the outcome from the last round of cuts to opening hours and the impact it has had on access to library services. |
|--|

5. Overall feedback on the proposals

Introduction

5.1 In this section, we summarise consultation responses to questions about their overall impact.

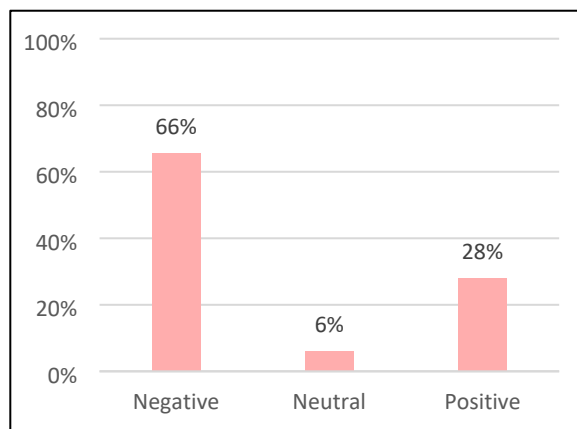
Overall feedback on the proposals

Survey responses

5.2 The survey included four questions which asked people to rate the proposals as a whole for their overall difference the proposals would make to the library service in Croydon; the difference they would make to visiting at a time convenient for them; near to where they live, work or study; and to accessing other council and community services.

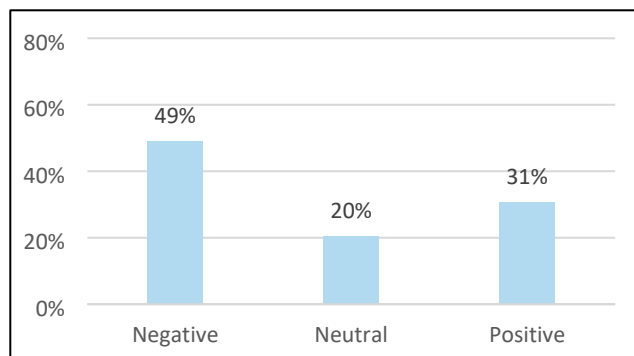
5.3 The responses revealed that two thirds of participants were negative (they would make it much worse/a little worse) about the proposals overall (66%) as opposed to positive (they would make it much better/a little better) (28%) and neutral (it won't make much difference) (6%).

Figure 5.1: What overall difference do you think the proposals will make to the library service in Croydon (3,552 responses)



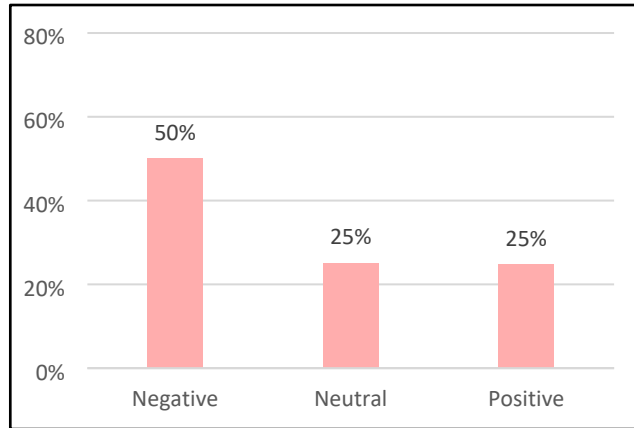
5.4 Almost half (49%) of respondents said it would impact negatively on their ability to visit a library at a convenient time.

Figure 5.2: Impact on visiting a library at a convenient time (3,579 responses)



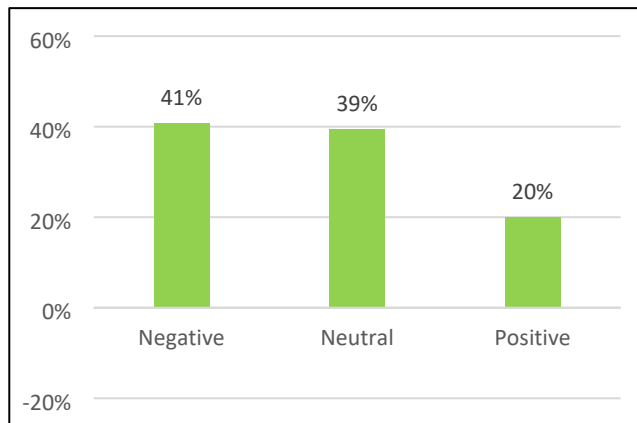
5.5 Half of respondents said the proposals would make it more difficult (a lot/a little) to visit a library close to where I live, work or study. 25% said it would make it easier (a lot/a little) and 25% said it would make no difference.

Figure 5.3: Impact on visiting a library close to where I live, work or study (3,567 responses)



5.6 A plurality of respondents said it would make it harder (a lot/a little) to access other council services or community activities. 20% said it would make it easier (a lot/a little), 39% said it would make no difference.

Figure 5.4: Impact on accessing other council services or community activities (3,540 responses)



Difference by library type

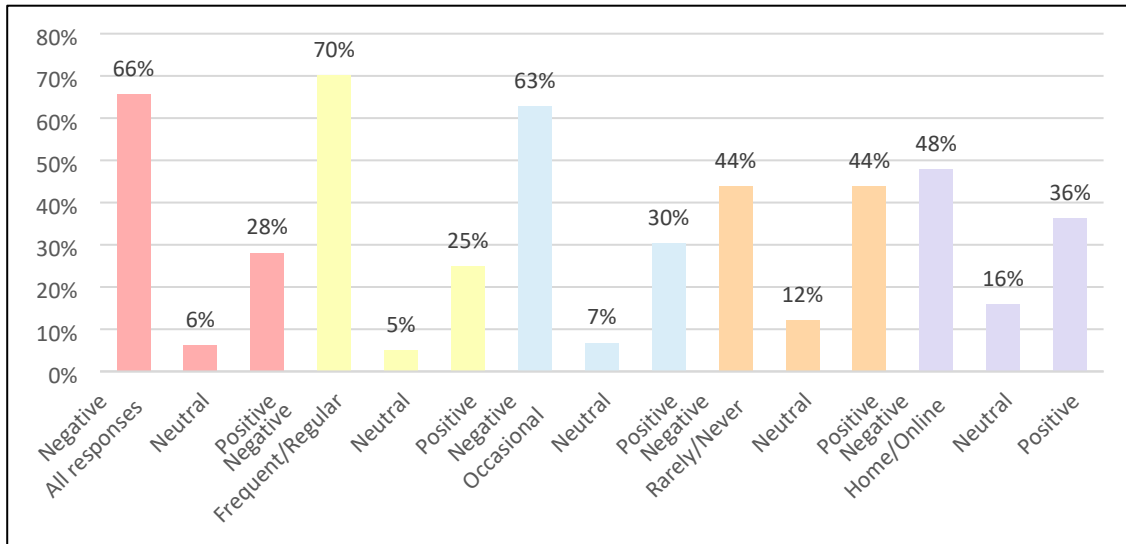
- 5.7 The survey responses to these questions have also been analysed by respondents' primary library affiliation (the library they visit most often). We have grouped the libraries according to their designation within the proposals, proposed library hubs, proposed community hubs, and libraries proposed for closure.
- 5.8 Not surprisingly, respondents from libraries that are proposed to close were much more likely to consider the changes to be negative (97% overall, 93% convenient time, 93% close to where I live, 77% access to other services). Respondents from proposed library and community hubs were less negative about the changes, although still generally evenly split between positive and negative, suggesting considerable solidarity with those using libraries proposed for closure. Among users of proposed library hubs and community hubs there were significant proportions of participants who thought the proposals would make little difference.

Table 5.1: Responses to impact of proposals by primary library affiliation

| | | All responses | | | Proposed closure | | | Library Hub | | | Community Hub | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------|----------|------------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|---------------|---------|----------|
| | | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Positive |
| Overall | % | 66% | 6% | 28% | 97% | 2% | 1% | 48% | 9% | 43% | 48% | 6% | 46% |
| | n | 2334 | 220 | 998 | 1271 | 26 | 18 | 588 | 111 | 538 | 283 | 34 | 270 |
| | Total | 3552 | 3552 | 3552 | 1315 | 1315 | 1315 | 1237 | 1237 | 1237 | 587 | 587 | 587 |
| Visit a library at a time convenient for me | % | 49% | 20% | 31% | 93% | 5% | 2% | 18% | 31% | 52% | 35% | 20% | 45% |
| | n | 1754 | 733 | 1092 | 1221 | 64 | 32 | 221 | 387 | 646 | 207 | 120 | 263 |
| | Total | 3579 | 3579 | 3579 | 1317 | 1317 | 1317 | 1254 | 1254 | 1254 | 590 | 590 | 590 |
| Visit a library close to where I live, work or study | % | 50% | 25% | 25% | 93% | 4% | 3% | 19% | 42% | 39% | 36% | 27% | 38% |
| | n | 1784 | 896 | 887 | 1225 | 46 | 42 | 239 | 520 | 491 | 209 | 157 | 222 |
| | Total | 3567 | 3567 | 3567 | 1313 | 1313 | 1313 | 1250 | 1250 | 1250 | 588 | 588 | 588 |
| Access other council services or community activities | % | 41% | 39% | 20% | 77% | 21% | 2% | 15% | 55% | 29% | 29% | 36% | 35% |
| | n | 1442 | 1393 | 705 | 999 | 278 | 23 | 191 | 688 | 363 | 168 | 212 | 206 |
| | Total | 3540 | 3540 | 3540 | 1300 | 1300 | 1300 | 1242 | 1242 | 1242 | 586 | 586 | 586 |

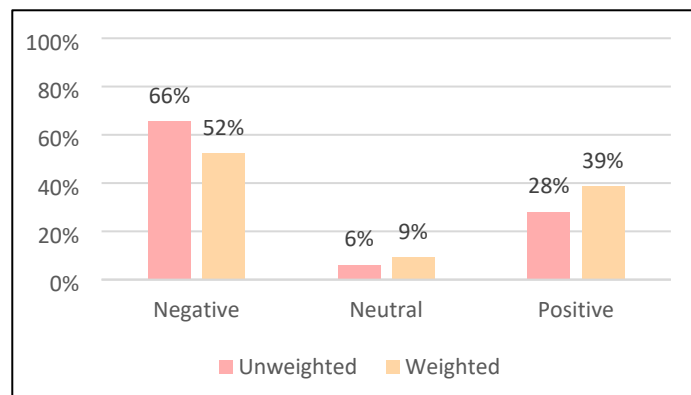
5.9 We have also analysed the responses to these questions by respondents’ frequency of library use. Frequent library users were more negative about the proposals than those who visit occasionally or the group of non-users (comprising never/rarely). Non users were equally divided between negative and positive responses to the proposals overall, and more positive than negative about their impact on visiting times, location and access to services.

Figure 5.5: Responses to impact of proposals by frequency of library visit



5.10 Given the large number of respondents who are users of the four libraries proposed for closure within the survey sample, compared to users of the nine other libraries, the responses to these questions have also been weighted according to number of active users for each library.³ The weighted responses are still show a small majority (52%) are negative about the proposals whereas 39% are positive about the overall impact of the proposals.

Figure 5.6: Responses to overall impact weighted by active user figures (3,552 responses)



³ While active user figures are subject to churn and contain some out-of-date addresses, a weighting by number of visits at each library produces a broadly similar result. This analysis excludes responses from those who ‘never’ visit libraries because they were not asked the question about which library they visit most.

5.11 When the responses to the other questions on the overall impact of the proposals are also weighted by each library’s number of active users, we see small but significant changes in the balance between negative and positive responses, but with larger proportions of neutral responses. The balance between negative and positive responses to the impact on people’s ability to visit a library at a time convenient to them is moderately more positive (42%) than negative (27%). The proportion of ‘neutral responses’ also increase to 31%.

Table 5.2: Impact of proposals both unweighted and weighted⁴

| | Negative | | Neutral | | Positive | |
|---|------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|----------|
| | Unweighted | Weighted | Unweighted | Weighted | Unweighted | Weighted |
| Overall impact | 66% | 52% | 6% | 9% | 28% | 39% |
| Visit a library at a time convenient for me | 49% | 27% | 20% | 31% | 31% | 42% |
| Visit a library close to where I live, work or study | 50% | 27% | 25% | 39% | 25% | 34% |
| Access other council services or community activities | 41% | 23% | 39% | 51% | 20% | 26% |

Responses from other consultation channels

5.12 From the range of consultation events the following extracts represent the key themes which emerge.

5.13 **The overall benefits of the proposals:** A small number of individuals cited the overall benefits of the proposals for Croydon’s library service as a whole. A significant number of participants were enthusiastic about weekend opening, particularly on Saturdays and evenings, although a repeated concern among these responses was the extent to which these additional hours would be staffed as opposed to enabled with Open+, as reported above. Individual comments from public meetings included:

- *Ashburton:* “Will any libraries be open on Sundays? That would be good.”
- *Thornton Heath:* “I don’t think you need to staff any.”
- *Purley:* “You’re closing four libraries? That’s fine.”
- *South Norwood:* “If there are multiple services in one place, don’t need as many people keeping places open.”
- *Shirley:* “Implementation would be good if new services result in improved wellbeing. Look at Parks – there are real calculations regarding the health benefits of parks.”

⁴

- 'I think this proposal could work really well if it is implemented thoughtfully. The central library (the one I use) lacks a bit of life and has off hours (closed on a Thursday, I think?!). Glad that there will be no job losses.' [Survey free text response]

5.14 **Concerns about the impact of the proposals affecting other libraries:** Strong concerns were heard from people about the impact of the proposals affecting other libraries. Individual comments included:

- *Central*: "Why would you close any libraries when there are so many people who need to use computers? And need help."
- *Ashburton*: "It's good for people here who will benefit, less for people near a library that will close."
- *Thornton Heath*: "'I don't agree with library closures but I appreciate it's a difficult decision."
- *Norbury*: "Locality is all important in a library service – activities as well."
- *New Addington*: "How can closing libraries improve the service?"
- *Purley*: "I have mixed feelings, post covid usage has declined."
- 'It will have a negative impact on all who use them. It will be necessary to travel further to access services. It will have a negative impact on schools and families who use them.' [survey free text response, user of proposed library hub]

5.15 **Questions about the definition of the proposed new model and the methodology by which they were arrived at:** A large number of individuals queried the definitions and rationale sitting behind the proposals:

- *Central*: "community hubs, community libraries & pop up libraries – (*needing*) to clarify the difference."
- *New Addington*: "Library" has meaning to people and "Community Hub" does not – what is it?"
- *South Norwood*: "Concerned that closing 4 libraries would not be enough to resource the rest."
- *Shirley*: "Why are we cutting so little, skimming on little things when you consider the value back?"

Sanderstead: "I think the Council have done an amazing thing to confuse the public – it won't close – it will close. It doesn't make any sense. The whole thing is smoke and mirrors and confusing."

- “Existing Community Hubs, such as the excellent ones at New Addington Pathfinders and The Family Centre in Fieldway should be built upon and expanded, rather than set up more Council Community Hubs - respect what's already there.” [survey free text response]
- “There is no transparency whatsoever on what the ‘community proposal’ means in practice.” [survey free text response]

5.16 **Criticism of the Council’s recent record of financial management and underinvestment in the library service over many years:** a significant number of participants were critical of the Council’s recent record of financial management and felt that the library service had been underinvested in over many years:

- *Central:* “happy when Croydon Libraries came back into the Council from Carillion, and you promised to invest in all the libraries and you haven’t. I work full time and they are never open when I can visit. My library service has been stolen from me.”
- *Ashburton:* “It would be good if there was more money for libraries from government and less for weapons.”
- *Thornton Heath:* “The Council is in a mess because of the property market.”
- *Selsdon:* “it’s hard to prioritise libraries when you see the need for other services like adults and children’s.”
- *New Addington:* “You should be able to save money by bringing other services into our library... general basis baffled why so many councils are going bankrupt”.
- *South Norwood:* “Council keeps saying this is not a done deal, but there is a community feeling that things will be rubber stamped, done already, decided already.”
- *Shirley:* “No-one trusts the council.”
- *Bradmore Green:* “there has not been any investment in years.”
- *Broad Green:* “What you have done in Council is run the service into the ground where even people who would use the service now don’t see the value in the service.”
- *Sanderstead:* “You increase our costs/Council tax and are taking our library away.”

5.17 **Strong opposition to the idea of closing each individual library.** Overwhelming unhappiness in each of the areas affected that these libraries had been targeted for closure compared to other parts of the borough. Individual comments included:

- *Shirley:* “It is ironic that Croydon is London Borough of Culture this year, and we are closing our cultural centres.”

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- *Bradmore Green*: “(The) community are saying they want the library to stay where it is so why are you saying all these other things.”
- *Broad Green*: “this is shortsighted.”
- *Sanderstead*: “Services aren’t being used because you cut down the libraries – (the library is) set up to fail because (it’s) not open on a Saturday.”

Key issues to consider from consultation

Key findings from consultation on the proposals overall

5.18 In the table below, we have summarised our key findings from this section:

Table 5.3: Overall feedback on the proposals– our key findings

Overall views on the proposals

- The majority of survey respondents were negative about the overall impact of the proposals. Those respondents who primarily visit the four libraries proposed for closure were understandably more negative than the users of the other libraries.
- When responses are weighted by the number of active users at each library, there remains a small majority who say the impact will be negative overall.
- When weighted by the number of active users at each library, the balance of responses is net positive for the impact on convenience of opening hours, location, and access to other council and community services.
- A handful of individuals acknowledged the overall benefits of the proposals for Croydon’s library service as a whole, including for their local libraries.
- Strong concerns were heard across all libraries about the impact of the proposed closures, demonstrating significant solidarity among users of libraries where opening hours are proposed to be extended.
- A frequent theme among participants was lack of understanding of the definition of proposed models, particularly the ‘library hubs’, ‘community hubs’ and ‘outreach’.
- A handful of participants criticised the way data about library usage had been deployed in the rationale for identifying libraries proposed for closure..
- A large number of participants criticised the Council’s recent record of financial management and felt that the library service had been underinvested in over many years.
- Among users of the four libraries proposed for closure, a significant theme was unhappiness that these libraries in the south of the borough had been targeted for closure, while investment was focused in central/north areas.

6. Feedback on proposed ‘library hubs’

The proposals on which the Council is consulting

- 6.1 In this section, we summarise what participants said during the consultation about the likely impact of the library hub proposals.

Library hub proposals (summary from consultation document)

- 6.2 “Six libraries open 5-6 days a week including every Saturday with the majority of hours staffed and extended hours with self-service access available from at least four sites. These sites will provide a broad service offer of reading, digital, health and culture delivered by the Council and community partners.”

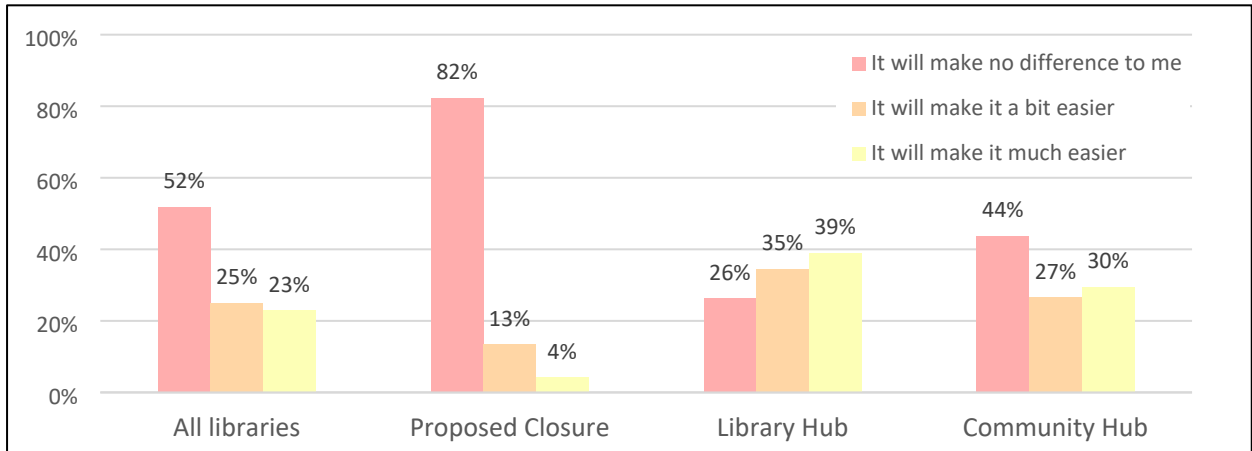
Overall views on the proposals -

Survey findings

- 6.3 The survey asked whether the extension of opening hours at the six proposed library hubs would make a difference to their ability to visit the library. 52% of respondents said it would make no difference, 25% said it would make it a little easier, while 23% said it would make it much easier.⁵
- 6.4 When analysed by library type, respondents whose primary library affiliation was a library proposed for closure were less positive about the value of the library hub proposal compared to users of library hubs or community hubs. It is clear that many of these library users see the proposal as purely negative if it is achieved through closure of the libraries they currently use.

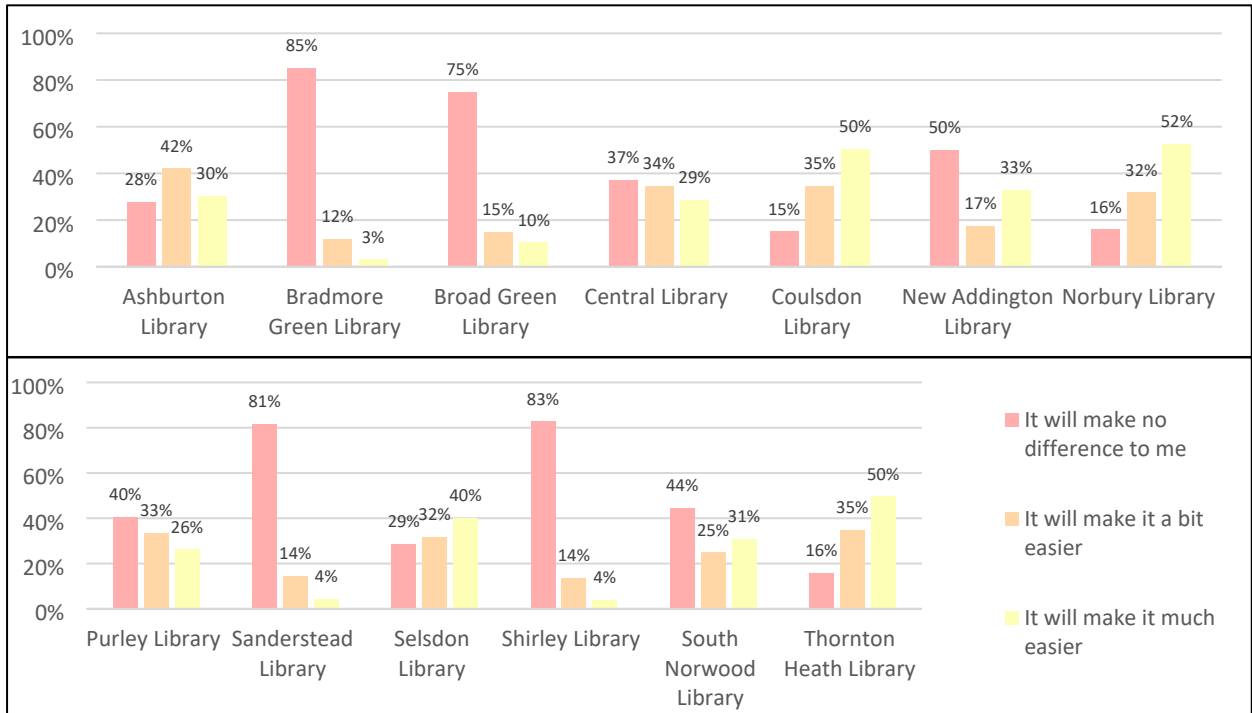
⁵ This question was focused on the impact of extending opening hours rather than the impact of closures. It did not therefore include the option for respondents to answer that the extended opening hours would make it more difficult for them to visit the library. A small number of respondents complained via email that the wording of this question was biased and precluded a strictly negative response along a balanced scale. However, opposition to library closures was clearly measured through the four parts of Q12 (overall impact of the proposals) and Q10 (whether people using libraries proposed for closure would be able to use another library).

Figure 6.1: What difference would the library hubs proposal with extended hours make to you ability to use the library more often (by library group)? (3,508 responses)



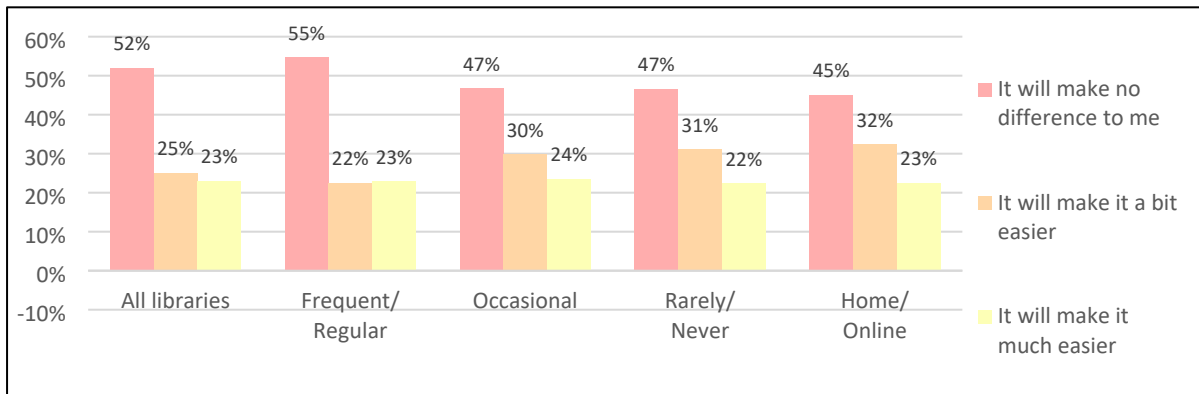
- 6.5 Examining the responses by each individual library, we see some differences also within these three groups of libraries. Among the four proposed for closure, the responses are almost uniformly negative, reflecting the views of the large majority of their users who view these proposals as negative for them because library hub hours are proposed to be extended by closing the libraries which they use.
- 6.6 Among community hub library users, the balance between negative and positive responses is broadly similar.
- 6.7 However, within the proposed library hub group, those using Central Library are markedly less positive about the benefits to them than users of other libraries, perhaps resulting from the relatively smaller increase in hours predicted at Central Library as opposed to the other five locations.

Figure 6.2: What difference would the library hubs proposal with extended hours make to you ability to use the library more often (by individual library)? (3,508 responses)



6.8 Looking at respondents' views according to their frequency of library use, the proportion saying it will make it a bit easier to visit a library was moderately higher for lower frequency visitors (occasional, non-user and home/online users).

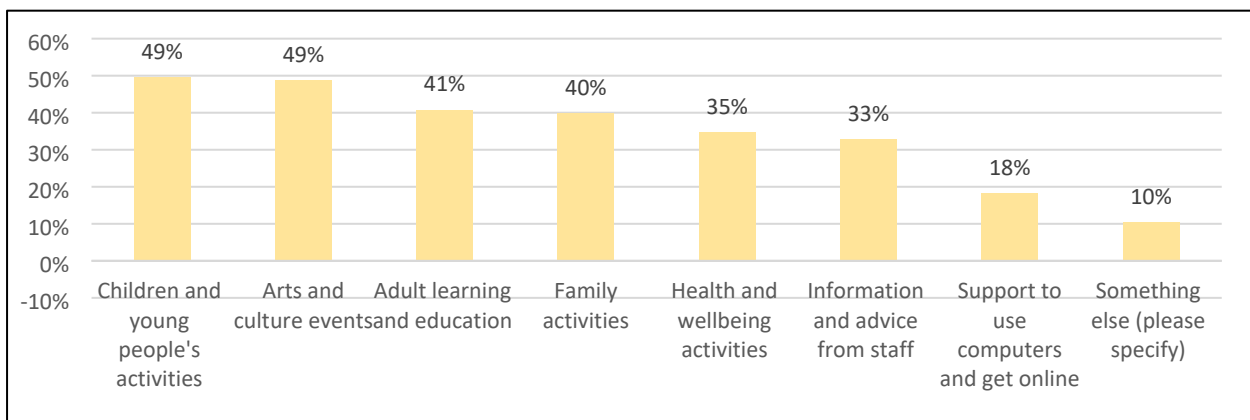
Figure 6.3: What difference would the library hubs proposal with extended hours make to you ability to use the library more often (by frequency)? (3,485 responses)



How would people like to make full use of the buildings which would be open 5 days a week including on Saturday?

6.9 The survey also asked what new activities people would prioritise in library hubs which were open for more days and longer hours. The most popular options were ‘children and young people’s activities, arts and cultural events, and adult education and learning.

Figure 6.4: What new activities would you most like to be available in ‘library hubs’? Please select your top three activities. (3,336 responses)



Impact of extending opening hours for 'Library Hubs'

- 6.10 From the range of consultation channels the following key themes emerge.
- 6.11 **The benefits of extending opening hours:** A large number of responses supported extended opening hours being proposed for their local libraries at Central, Ashburton, Thornton Heath, Norbury, Selsdon and Coulsdon, and/or at other branches. Individual comments included:
- *Central*: “did not realise the wider proposals were to increase opening hours – in favour of opening Central on Thursdays and extending opening hours in general.”
 - *Thornton Heath*: “I like the proposals – three days isn’t enough here.”
 - *Norbury*: “Biggest issue locally is closure on Saturdays.”
- 6.12 **Criticism of the current ‘library hub’ concept being proposed:** Conversely a significant number of respondents were critical of the Library Hub concept being proposed. Individual comments included:
- “Extending hours isn’t enough. The council needs to do more to attract a broader range of residents to visit and use the library. As well, more events or activities for those outside of the toddlers range would be a good start.” [survey free text response]
 - “I think it unfair to lose 4 libraries. You should be enhancing and extending all libraries in Croydon.” [survey free text response]
 - “Can’t get to your ‘hubs’ so you could have dancing llamas and clowns and it wouldn’t make any difference.” [survey free text response]
 - “Shirley library is part of the community for people who haven’t got transport , plus there would be more air pollution using cars and more traffic on the roads, completely counterproductive!!!” [survey free text response]
- 6.13 **Suggestions and queries to be considered as part of the Library Hub concept:** A diverse range of suggestions, comments and criticisms were made about the Hub concept being proposed. Individual comments included:
- *Central*: ““Longer hours needed during the week and Saturdays – need more time for studying.”
 - *Ashburton*: “How does self-service access work?”
 - *Thornton Heath*: “With self-service, I’m a bit bothered about people going in alone.”
 - *Norbury*: “More evening opening would be good.”
 - *Selsdon*: “I’d rather have a local library open two days.”
 - *Coulsdon*: “Location is more important than the number of hours open.”

Petition

- 6.14 In response to the consultation, the following petition was also received on behalf of Norbury Green Residents Association, signed by 994 people.⁶

“On behalf of and Supported by

LOVE NORBURY incl SERA (Scotts Estate Residents Association) , NVRA (Norbury Village Residents Association) The Norbury Bowling Club, Friends of Norbury Park, Knit Norbury Together an Friends of Norbury Hall Park

This petition was demanded by our Residents Association Members at our 2023 AGM, and quickly gathered 994 responses, most from local Croydon users but also from those who came into our borough for the Love Norbury Literary Festival which filled the library in May last year.

We recognise that a lot has happened in the meantime. We welcome the trial introduction of self-service opening and the proposal to establish Norbury Library as a Hub with increased staffed hours. We appreciate the help Library Services have given in support of our events.

However the issue of Saturday opening and access to the community hall remains. Self-serve does not help those teenagers under the age of 16 and studying for GCSEs because they are not allowed in. It does not help working parents who cannot get to the library in staffed hours to register so that they can bring their children at weekends.

Being in the North of the borough the library serves communities living with some of Croydon’s highest indices of disadvantage. For example Windsor House, housing Croydon’s homeless and refugees is across the road from the library. And all Norbury residents endure the fact that Norbury has been identified as a crime hotspot in the Violence Reduction Strategic Assessment.

Many young people live in the 1000 or more small two-bed homes in the Tylecoft and Northborough Road area and have no desk space in which to work or study, and on several occasions we have witnessed young people trying to access the library on a Saturday and being turned away, surely this isn't what we want?

Lack of fully staffed Saturday opening is a directly undermining the ability of some of our most disadvantaged residents to achieve their educational potential.

And while Library service staff do their best to facilitate hire there is no current access in the evenings, no transparently publicised hire facilities for the community. Croydon Council social services are referring clients to one particular Norbury Voluntary Group – and yet this group has no space to operate from. The Knitting group support women to learn English alongside knitting – but cannot operate at the weekend. We know of choirs, drama groups young people’s groups – all desperate for affordable space to

⁶ The Norbury Residents Association reported by email that: “We had 994 signatories in total from the online petition and paper copies. Though not all were from Croydon - some from just over the border in Merton (as the library is walkable from the other end of Northborough Rd) and Lambeth Woodmansterne Rd area, again walkable) , and a few from further afield. But the vast majority were Croydon. And the petition introduction at Council was officially endorsed by Love Norbury and all the organisations it represents.”

contribute to a thriving Croydon – if only they had space! You have that space on the form of the library!

We present this petition on behalf of our residents who need fully staffed hours every Saturday and after school and work, and the community groups who would like to be able to make regular bookings to support their community, educational and social activities. Thank you.”

6.15 From the range of consultation channels the following key themes emerge.

6.16 **Enhanced local community use:**

- *Norbury*: “Local groups could have more access – Literary event recently was good.”
- *Coulsdon*: “Asset for Old Coulsdon as a community centre – to interact, as an important community asset.”

6.17 **Continuation of existing service offers:** Individual comments included:

- *Thornton Heath*: “More film and art events would be good – the Constable exhibition was great”; “PC provision is very important”; “PCs”; “art”, and “film (resources).”

6.18 **New, or enhanced, service offers:**

- *Thornton Heath*: “Would be great to see more art events and exhibitions and film screenings.”
- *Norbury*: “Would you open the café? I might volunteer here for an hour.”

Alternative use of internal space:

- *Central*: “We like the library closed on Thursdays because there are no complaints about our music. We cannot have drummers because there were complaints from someone in the building... Why can't they just reschedule their meetings/classes to avoid our events which are very popular. It's unreasonable.”
- *Central*: “space for a wellbeing centre in Clocktower/Central Library.”
- *Norbury*: “would like to see the library used for more things – especially the hall.”
- *Coulsdon*: “Use it more for renting out space.”

What other improvements in the offer at library hubs would people support?

6.19 From the range of consultation channels the following key themes emerge.

6.20 **Further opening hour adjustments:**

- *Central*: “Opening hours – key issue. Libraries are not underused – it is impossible to use a library that is closed.”

6.21 **Marketing and promotion of the service offer:**

- *Selsdon*: “Can you put a bigger sign about the library? – always been a problem here because of the location; Same at Coulsdon – if you don’t know where the library is you wouldn’t know.”
- *Coulsdon*: “Advertising and publicity of events.”

6.22 **Physical fabric improvements, including technology:**

- *Central*: “Central library furniture doesn’t look updated since 1990s when the library opened?”
- *Thornton Heath*: “Are we going to improve the fabric of Thornton Heath building – looking at new chairs in IT space, toilets, quality of look and feel.”
- *Norbury*: “Haven’t used self-service yet but would do.”
- *Selsdon*: “Why has study space changed at central? There isn’t enough space.”

6.23 **Service offer extensions, or enhancements:**

- *Central*: “We love Rhymetime every Saturday – could you do more children’s activities?”
- *Ashburton*: “Will you have wi-fi in all libraries?.”
- *Thornton Heath*: “More children’s activities would be good.”
- *Norbury*: “Used to have discussions and talks – I use the computers.”
- *Selsdon*: “More events and book clubs.”

6.24 **Transport or travel support:**

- *Coulsdon*: “Lack of parking at other libraries.”

6.25 **Staffing and/or using volunteers:**

- *Thornton Heath*: “You haven’t made volunteers work.”
- *Selsdon*: “Volunteers not properly trained or overstepping mark is a worry.”

6.26 **Working with local partners:**

- *Thornton Heath*: “link with the healthy community hub and bring more activities into the library.”

What will be the specific impacts on people with protected characteristics?

6.27 From the range of consultation channels the following key themes emerge:

6.28 **Older people:**

- *Central*: “programming for people who are retired.”
- *Selsdon*: “Do you work with (*the*) retired centre?”

6.29 **Disabled people:**

- *Thornton Heath*: “We need face to face contact especially for people who need help.”
- *Norbury*: “Disabled friend has been stuck in the lift recently.”

6.30 **Global majority communities:**

- *Central*: “Central Library helped me get my Master’s Degree – could not have done it without the library (person saying he was refugee with autism/ADHD).”

Which needs or groups are not currently being met or reached?

6.31 From the range of consultation channels the following key themes emerge:

6.32 **IT and digital support:**

- *Selsdon*: “Digital divide growing greater in society.”

6.33 **Maintaining the strengths of the existing service offer:**

- *Thornton Heath*: “At home its noisy, I want to go somewhere quiet to study.”

6.34 **Marketing and promotion of the service offer:**

- *Selsdon*: “How do I find out about events in the libraries?”

6.35 **Missing service offers:**

- *Central*: “We would like more talks in the library.”

6.36 **Perceived reduced future access to staff:**

- *Selsdon*: “council workers should be there in person – people storm out because they can’t get any help.”

6.37 **Potential partners:**

- *Central*: “public libraries are used as substitutes for inadequate school and college libraries.”
- *Norbury*: “Have you connected with the Cassandra Centre?”

6.38 **Safety concerns:**

- *Selsdon*: “Problem with Central is young people misusing and pressure on space and demand.”

6.39 **Transport and travel mitigations:**

- *Selsdon*: “only way to get down to Coulsdon is on a bus.”
- *Coulsdon*: “Transport links between the different areas hinders people moving to other libraries.”

Key issues to consider from consultation

6.40 In the table below, we have summarised our key findings from this section:

Table 6.1: Feedback on library hub proposals – our key findings

| |
|--|
| <p>Impact of extending opening hours for 'Library Hubs'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrow majority of all survey respondents did not see any benefit in extending opening hours at library hubs for them. • However, among survey respondents who are users of the six libraries proposed as new library hubs, a majority of respondents said it would make it easier to access the library service. • A large number of participants expressed the view that while extending opening hours would be a benefit for them, they did not want this to happen as a result of closing libraries in other communities. • A handful of individuals were critical of the Library Hub concept being proposed. • Many respondents suggested additional ideas for consideration as part of the Library Hub concept, or raised specific queries about how it would work. <p>Making full use of the buildings open longer including on Saturdays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large number of suggestions were made to make full use of the buildings with extended opening hours, including a range of community uses, increasing the number of existing popular activities, particularly for children; developing a range of new programmes including arts, health and wellbeing, and learning, and alternative uses of internal space for different users. <p>Further improvements to the offer at proposed library hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large number of participants shared their thoughts about other improvements that would enhance the Library Hub offer being proposed. These included further enhancing opening hours including Sundays and more events; better marketing and promotion of the offer; improvements to the physical fabric of libraries; upgrading technology; transport or travel support; more staffing and/or using volunteers, and working more with local partners. <p>The impact on people with protected characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large number of respondents identified a wide potential range of positive and negative impacts, or concerns, for library users possessing protected characteristics as a result of the Library Hub proposals being implemented, including better servicing needs for older people disabled people and global majority communities. Negative impacts suggested related mainly to current users of libraries proposed for closure who, it was said, would be unable to access services at library hubs. Positive comments related mainly to the current barrier of restricted opening hours. |
|--|

7. Feedback on community hub proposals

What the Council is consulting on

- 7.1 In this section, we summarise what participants have said during the consultation about their thoughts on the likely impact of the community hub proposals.

Community hub proposal (summary from consultation document)

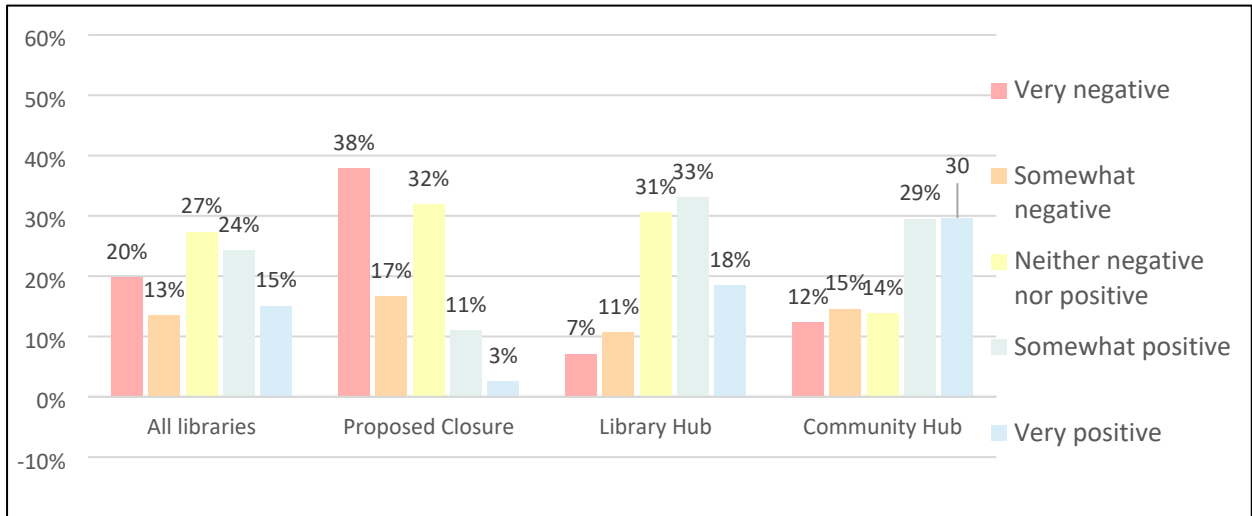
- 7.2 “Three libraries situated in a shared venue as part of a wider service offer for residents, for example as part of a Family Hub, Adult Learning Hub or Voluntary and Community Service Hub. These sites would include dedicated library space to hold a range of book collections for children and adults, provide Wi-Fi and public computer access and host events and activities and will also be available on weekends.”
- 7.3 The ‘community hub’ concept has still been at a formative stage of development during the consultation, as the Council is seeking to develop the model in response to local need through its engagement.

Overall views on the proposals

Survey findings

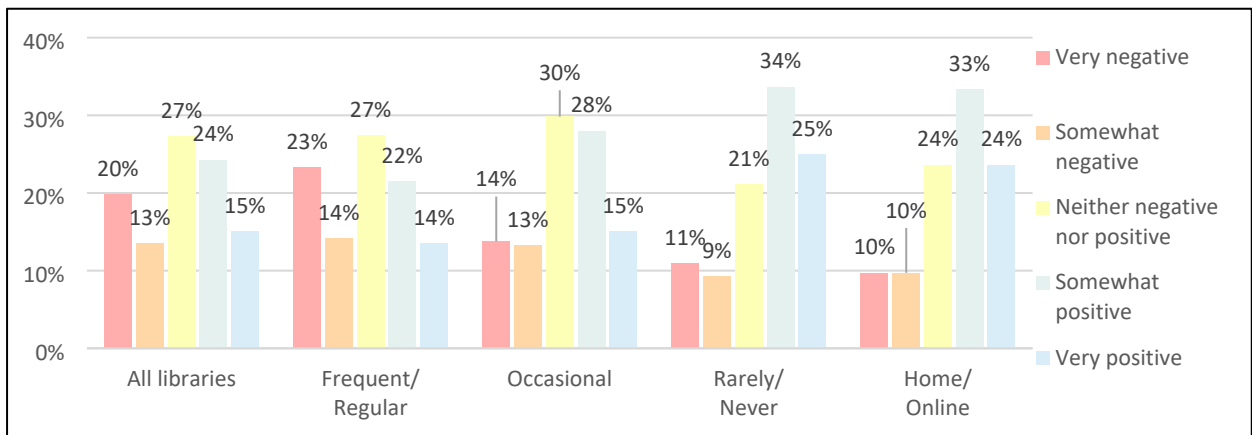
- 7.4 The survey asked how positive or negative people ~~they~~ felt about the proposal to develop New Addington, Purley and South Norwood as “community hubs’ run in partnership with other council services and community organisations”. Overall respondents were slightly more positive (very positive/somewhat positive 39%) than negative (very negative/somewhat negative, 33%%). The most frequent single response was ‘neither positive or negative’ (27%), which is consistent with many free text responses that respondents were unclear about the concept of ‘community hubs’ for these libraries. When broken down by primary library affiliation we see that users of the four libraries proposed for closure were the only group to be net negative about the community hub proposal.

Figure 7.1: How positive or negative do you feel about the proposal to develop three libraries as new community hubs? (3,552 responses)



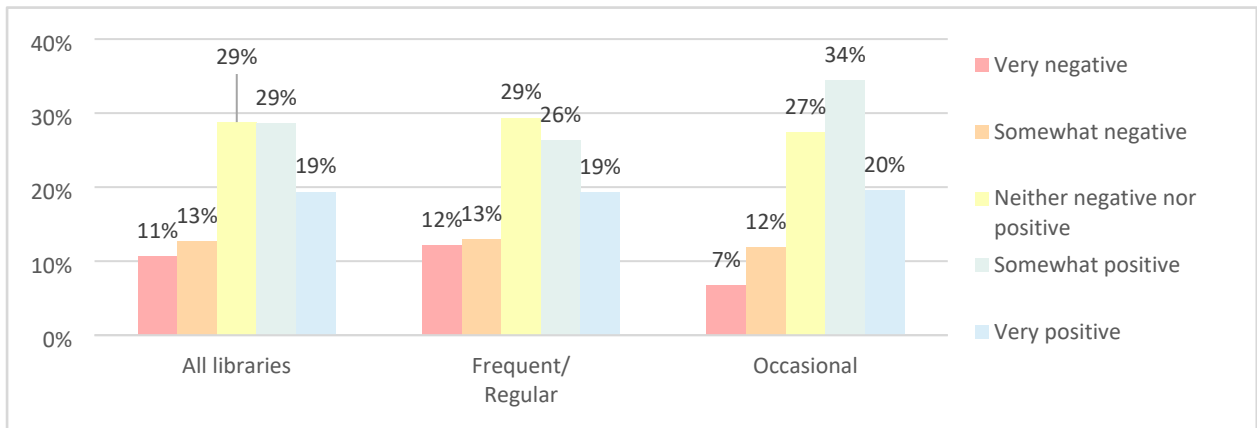
7.5 When the total responses are analysed by frequency of library use we find that frequent library visitors were most negative above the community hub, with non-users, and online or home library users most positive.

Figure 7.2: Responses to community hub proposal by frequency of library use (3,566 responses)



7.6 When these responses are weighted by the number of active users at each library, the proportion of respondents who were very negative reduced considerably, while the rest of the responses increased slightly, but generally remained in relatively similar proportions. This reflects the greater number of respondents from libraries that are proposed to close compared to users of other libraries and that these respondents were generally more negative towards changes than other respondents. It should be noted that those who rarely/never visited, or who used libraries from home/online were not included in the weighting as these were not included in the question about which library they visited most.

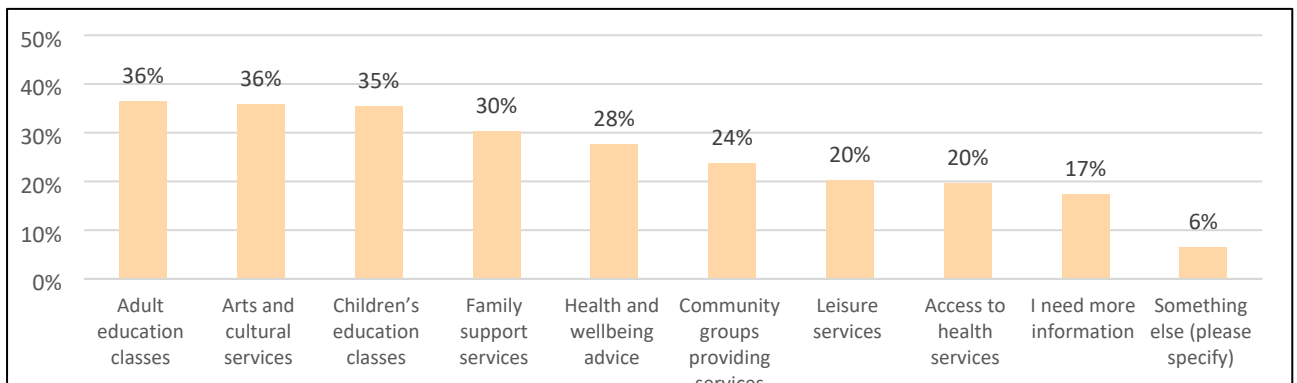
Figure 7.3: Responses to community hub proposals by frequency of library use; weighted by active users across the library service (3,156 responses)



7.7 There was also a proportionally lower response from people using New Addington Library, one of the proposed ‘community hubs’, suggesting additional engagement and analysis of other data related to need is required in developing the model further for this community.

7.8 The survey also asked what services people would prioritise alongside the library in new community hubs. The three most popular options were ‘arts and cultural services’, ‘adult education classes’ and ‘children’s education classes’. 577 (17%) said they needed more information about the proposal.

Figure 7.4: Which services would you prioritise alongside the library in new community hubs? (3,328 responses)



7.9 A handful of respondents (13) voiced opposition to the concept in the free text box for other suggestions, particularly from the perspective of users of libraries proposed for closure.

7.10 Through the range of consultation channels, the following key messages emerge from what participants have said:

Impact of extending opening hours for 'Community Hubs'

7.11 **Positive:** A handful of individuals pointed to benefits of the extended opening hours being proposed for their local libraries at New Addington, Purley, South Norwood, and/or at other branches. Individual comments included:

- *New Addington:* ““We all want it desperately – need a space open five days per week and study space is important.”
- *Purley:* “Saturday opening is crucial.”
- *South Norwood:* “Would like the library open longer and on Saturdays.”

7.12 **Negative:** A significant number of individuals were critical of the Community Hub concept being proposed. Individual comments included:

- *New Addington:* “I’m prepared to keep three days here so others don’t close.”
- *Purley:* “The environment [during Open+ hours] with one guard might cause concerns about violence and incidents. I wouldn’t feel as comfortable staying all day.”

Understanding of the ‘community hub’ model

7.13 There was a wide range of understanding about the community hub model. A significant number of responses questioned the community hub model for these three libraries. Many said libraries were already ‘hubs’ within their community. Others pointed to existing ‘hub’ models in family support, health and wellbeing, asking how these would work together, or were struggling to understand the difference between the ‘library hubs’ and ‘community hubs’ within the proposals. Some were concerned about a perceived ‘dilution’ of the library offer. Some suggested misconceptions about plans for these libraries, including people who thought the library was closing. Others were more positive about linking with other community services but were unsure about how it would work. Individual comments included:

- “I’m sad and disappointed that South Norwood library is being downgraded.” [survey free text response]
- “Not helpful for residents of Purley. You are planning to close our library in the current location yet no one I have spoken to is able to give me an answer as to where this new proposed hub will go.” [survey free text response]
- “Sounds good but not if Community hubs mean less [sic] books in library.” [survey free text response]
- “There is no transparency whatsoever on what the ‘community proposal’ means in practice.” [survey free text response]
- “Having more services connected to the library would be an improvement and an asset to the community.” [survey free text response]

- “Link with other hub initiatives, share strategic funding with One Croydon , family hubs etc.” [survey free text response]
- “Libraries should come under council services with trained librarians. They should not be offloaded to community groups who do not have the knowledge to run them.” [survey free text response]
- “This seems like a trick, reducing our library to something like a non statutory bookshelf. We need dedicated buildings for other council services, they shouldn’t be taking up precious library space.” [survey free text response]
- “This is very welcome particularly for families with young children that cannot afford heating or books. This is also beneficial for homeless people that don’t have anywhere else to go during the day.” [survey free text response]
- “Very concerned about library closures. These are neutral spaces that all schools should take their children to. Closing South Norwood would make it harder to walk there for schools in the area. Libraries are neutral spaces, secular for all.” [survey free text response]

7.14 **Additional ideas and suggestions:** A number of respondents suggested additional ideas to be considered as part of the Community Hub concept, or had specific queries about how it would work:

- *New Addington:* “Why can’t we install Open+ in more libraries? It’s better than closing everything.”
- *Purley:* “By bringing services together we could extend opening hours/days. Esp if there are other services in the space.”
- *South Norwood:* “Open+ unstaffed library: worries me and what if there is a problem. No problems in this library but you never know – if there was a fight then you need to have at least one staff person, someone you can go to and feel comfortable.”

How would people like to make full use of the buildings which would be open more days a week including on Saturday?

7.15 From the range of consultation channels the following key messages emerge:

7.16 **Enhanced local community use:**

- *New Addington:* “Who do we speak to if someone wants to hire spaces?”
- *Purley:* “good to share spaces for public events and activities.”
- *South Norwood:* “Ecosystem of community organisations.”

7.17 **Continuation of existing service offers:**

- *New Addington:* “building is quite accessible to everyone – everyone visits central parade every day, it’s on bus routes – this site is well located.”

- *New Addington*: “children in year 11, in GCSE, need study space. I’m being vocal but there’s a silent majority who also need – education and libraries have a strong link and we should not compromise on this.”
- *Purley*: “Safe space – I see myself represented – kind people without expectations. Can sit on my own. All global majorities welcome, LGBTQ+ safe. People feel comfortable.”
- *South Norwood*: “Need for social connection, intergenerational point is really important. Building community. [Story Quilt is example!]”

7.18 **New, or enhanced, service offers:**

- *New Addington*: “Early Years – speech and language support – help by providing books to Fieldway Centre.”
- *Purley*: “Could a Toddler Group or Coffee morning, computer training, run by Purley Cross (Baptist Church) currently next door where there is no space, be hosted in Purley Library.”
- *South Norwood*: “Connecting the diverse communities: Holistic; Leadership; Campaigning; Getting out (i.e. into people’s homes).”

7.19 **Alternative use of internal space:**

- *New Addington*: “Has the council looked to hire space out?”
- *South Norwood*: “a community hub with additional services coming in.”

What other improvements in the offer at community hubs would people support?

7.20 From the range of consultation channels the following key messages emerge:

7.21 **Further opening hour adjustments:**

- *South Norwood*: “Drop in space – just walk in and not worry about open times.”
- “Libraries may not need 6 full working days but definitely some evenings, some mornings and weekend to be open with more options.” [Survey free text response, proposed, Community Hub library user]
- “South Norwood’s opening hours exclude so many people on our community. Opening on a Saturday would be a free (rainy day proofed) activity for families to do. Please don’t let this be something that gets shelved.” [Survey free text response, proposed Community Hub library user]

7.22 **Marketing and promotion of the service offer:**

- *New Addington*: “Outside signage needs to be improved - New Addington centre sign doesn’t say libraries.”

- *Purley*: “Major psychological rebrand – one space with libraries, training & education, and all the other groups – call it hub. Or ask the community to name it. Shift idea – equal partners that co-exist in the same space.”

7.23 **Physical fabric improvements, including technology:** Individual comments included:

- *New Addington*: “In this library there has been issue with internet – Wi-Fi doesn’t work on top floor – staff said they have raised a case.”
- *Purley*: “More inviting spaces and a more modern feel would reach more people.”
- *South Norwood*: “Closed doors in South Norwood and parks all shut. Places don’t look very welcoming.”
- *New Addington*: “Students and others need data in the library”; “Books are not in fashion. Tablets and google searches are in fashion.”
- *New Addington*: “GLL (leisure centre) are asked for printing services – more requests since the library is closed.”

7.24 **Service offer extensions, or enhancements:** Individual comments included:

- *New Addington*: “Use local open spaces for activities – Teddy Bears picnic, story time outdoors, treasure hunt.”
- *South Norwood*: “Communal social space, multi-use and all different groups can access it.”
- *Purley*: “Debt support and more holistic support would be good. People aren’t taught that at school. We need a money management course.”
- “I’d especially love more chances to get involved with music activities such as a choir, piano lessons and performances. Would also be really interested in more opportunities for social connection e.g. through arts and crafts activities, author events, book groups. South Norwood Library has always had proportionally very high computer usage rates so I’d like to see the library provide digital inclusion services including access device and data banks and support with digital skills. I’m interested in creative technologies so would also like to see opportunities to try out new software and equipment such as a 3d printer, VR headsets or sewing machines. We have 8 secondary school, FE and alternative education settings within a mile of the library so the community hub should definitely cater to the needs of young people. Lots of people feel uncomfortable on the high street at the end of the school day so offering young people a safe space to do homework or socialise would be really valuable for everyone.” [Consultation Email response]

7.25 **Transport or travel support:** A significant number of responses, often from current users of libraries proposed for closure were concerned or angry about the prospect of having to travel to ‘community hub’ libraries, citing distance and transport issues:

- “Buses from under-served areas of the borough of Croydon (that we pay full council tax for - for what?) so we can visit these marvellous hubs that we can't get access to with our extremely limited public transport and no car.” [Survey free text response]
- “Services wouldn't be used by local residents who can't get to NEW ADDINGTON, SOUTH NORWOOD OR PURLEY, ridiculous.”

7.26 **Staffing and/or using volunteers:** Individual comments included:

- *New Addington:* “Could you be open more with more volunteers?”

7.27 **Working with local partners:** Individual comments included:

- *New Addington:* “Can we look at what other services are available locally and how we can share resources and costs?”
- *Purley:* “Purley Baptist church provide welcome packs to new residents and would be willing to add a library leaflet to the pack.”
- *South Norwood:* “People who believe in collaboration – mindset is authentically collaboration and not just for benefit of one particular organisation.”

What will be the specific impacts on people with protected characteristics?

7.28 From the range of consultation channels the following key messages emerge:

7.29 **Older people;** Individual comments included:

- *Purley:* “A grandma comes to the session with her granddaughter - there is an intergenerational factor.”

7.30 **Special education needs (SEN);** Individual comments included:

- *South Norwood:* “As a parent of a child with additional needs – there is not much consideration for cost of transporting lots of equipment, and to make clinical appointments. If the child is under 3 there is not much support.”

7.31 **Disabled people;** Individual comments included:

- *Purley:* “If you have limited mobility in the libraries proposed to close people will lose a local facility.”

7.32 **Those facing Mental health or Physical health challenges;** Individual comments included:

- *South Norwood:* “depression which can impact people from all different areas. Support is key.”

7.33 **Global communities:** Individual comments included:

- *South Norwood:* “Diversity in South Norwood – massively diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age, income, and demographic here is bonkers diverse in a brilliant way.”
- *South Norwood:* “Connecting diverse communities: No focal points or central space. This poses an opportunity – central space could be a solution.”

7.34 **Digitally excluded.** Individual comments included:

- *New Addington:* “digital offer - there are families with one PC to share with family – no one is going to be reading on this.”
- *South Norwood:* “Huge need in the area. Tower blocks and food banks – huge need.”

Which needs or groups are not currently being met?

7.35 From the range of consultation channels the following key messages emerge:

7.36 **Deprived communities: Individual comments included:**

- “It’s outrageous. Libraries have not been fully open or advertised so of course they are under used. We all need a local library. It’s so important. It’s not impossible. This model ignores Shrublands Estate. There is nothing on offer for these people often.”

7.37 **Maintaining the strengths of the existing service offer:**

- *New Addington:* “Why doesn’t the council help communities raise their own money?”
- *South Norwood:* “young people to hang out – need a place where they can find power and internet access. Moved here from Lambeth – shocked at lack of support.”

7.38 **Marketing and promotion of the service offer:**

- *Purley:* “People don’t know when libraries are open or what activities are going on.”

7.39 **Potential partners suggested by participants:**

- *New Addington:* “Ahmadiyya Muslims looking for a home. Currently at Fieldway Centre.”
- *Purley:* “(we are) looking for space to deliver courses in the local area.”
- *South Norwood:* “Harris 6 form, 3 very different secondary schools, colleges – lots of them. There is a “Them and Us” issue for young people; older people are afraid.”

7.40 **Public realm:**

- *South Norwood:* “High street feels cluttered and unwelcoming.”

7.41 Transport and travel mitigations:

- *New Addington*: “Where will old Coulsdon people go?”
- *South Norwood*: “I don’t want to get on a bus to do a free activity.”

7.42 A number of further ideas were suggested:

- *New Addington*: “Mobile library used to go all around the neighbourhood and into schools – bring this back.”
- *South Norwood*: “Outreach for dentists – something to learn from dental outreach. Dentaaid do outreach in communities; used to be a charity working abroad but now doing outreach in UK where there is a crisis in dental care.”

Key issues to consider from consultation

7.43 In the table below, we have summarised our key findings from this section:

Table 7.1: Response to proposals for three ‘community hubs’ at New Addington, Purely and South Norwood – our key findings

Impact of extending opening hours for 'Community Hubs'

- There is strong support for extending the opening hours at the three libraries proposed as ‘community hubs’. However, there is considerable opposition to this being achieved by closing other libraries.
- There was a significant lack of understanding among many responses about what the ‘community hub’ model would look like, which generated a wide range of reactions from positive to negative, and scepticism about what it would entail.
- There were also a number of concerns expressed about how well developed the ‘community hub’ model was, lack of clarity about future location of these three sites, and exactly how they would work with other services.
- There were many suggestions for a wide range of services which could be included, including many specific to each community, but adult education, children’s activities and arts and cultural activities were the most popular responses in the survey.

Making better use of buildings open longer including on Saturdays:

- Among the many suggestions made to make better use of longer opening hours, Many of these reflected similar preferences for proposed library hubs.
- The needs of a wide range of users were identified for programmes at the proposed community hubs. These included families (including those with SEN or low income support needs); parents; grandparents; carers; school age children (primary and teenagers); home educators; retired people; elderly residents; adults with special educational needs; people in need or crisis; adults with disabilities; the digitally excluded, people experiencing loneliness, and those experiencing homelessness.

Other improvements to the offer at proposed community hubs:

- A number of participants shared their thoughts about the possible other improvements that could be put in place to enhance the Community Hub offer being proposed. These reflected similar preferences to the users of proposed library hubs, including further opening hour adjustments; improved marketing and promotion of the service offer; improvements to the physical fabric of buildings, including technology; transport or travel support; more staffing and/or using volunteers, and better working with local partners.

The specific impacts on people with protected characteristics

- A significant number of participants identified detrimental impacts on library users possessing protected characteristics as a result of the proposals being implemented. These were principally current users of libraries proposed for closure who, it was suggested would no longer be able to access the library service, including older people; disabled people; those facing mental health or physical health challenges; global majority communities.
- Conversely a small number of people pointed to the benefits of the community hub model and outreach in engaging more people with a range of needs in the community, particularly those with mental health challenges, the digitally excluded, disabled people and global majority communities.

Which needs or groups are not currently being met

- A number of gaps in current provision were identified, which were often positioned as the result of the previous reduction in opening hours, but which also pointed to groups in the community traditionally less likely to access the library service.

Views on outreach

- A number of suggestions were made for how outreach from community hub libraries could better engage those not currently using libraries, particularly involving children and young people, deprived communities and those with literacy challenges.

8. Response to proposed closure of four libraries

What the Council is consulting on

- 8.1 In this section, we summarise what participants have said during the consultation about the impact of the closure proposals.

Closure proposals summarised (from the consultation documents)

- 8.2 “To make the improvements proposed [at the nine other sites], four library buildings; Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, and Shirley are proposed to be closed. This proposal is based on analysis of the buildings including visitor numbers, size and condition of the buildings, the size and needs of the communities they serve and running costs.”
- 8.3 **Proposed outreach service:** “A library service offer delivered in other community spaces including community centres, children’s centres, care homes and community events. The offer could include community book collections, children’s and adults events, digital support and access to information. This also includes the Home Library Service.”

Overall views on the closure proposals

Survey findings

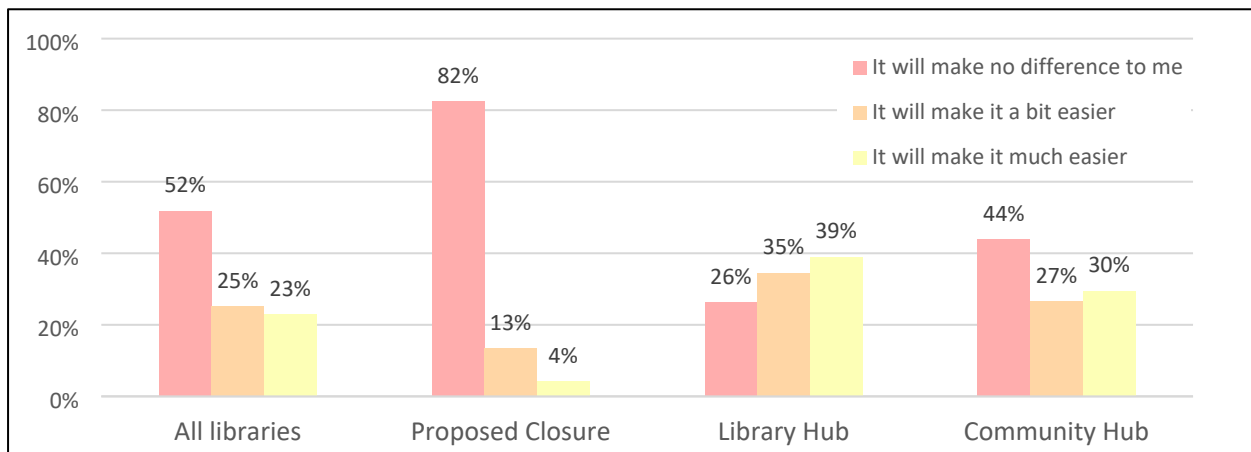
- 8.4 We have already seen in the analysis of the responses to the impact of the proposals overall that the majority of responses were negative about the overall impact because of the inclusion of closures (66%). Within these responses the users of the four libraries proposed for closure were understandably the most negative about the impact. When the number of responses is weighted by the share of active users at each library, the majority of negative responses is smaller (52%). (See 5.11 above)
- 8.5 However, even among users of proposed library hubs and community hubs, those who are more positive about the changes often additionally gave feedback that demonstrated solidarity with those using the four libraries proposed for closure. Many people are reluctant to advocate improvements to their libraries at the cost of closing libraries in other parts of the borough.
- 8.6 Users of the four libraries proposed for closure were also the most negative about the impact of the proposed changes on the other factors which were polled – convenient location, convenient opening hours, and ability to access other council and community services.

Table 8.1: Response of users of the four libraries proposed for closure to the proposals

| | | All responses | | | Users of libraries proposed for closure | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| | | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Positive |
| Overall | % | 66% | 6% | 28% | 97% | 2% | 1% |
| | n | 2334 | 220 | 998 | 1271 | 26 | 18 |
| | Total | 3552 | 3552 | 3552 | 1315 | 1315 | 1315 |
| Visit a library at a time convenient for me | % | 49% | 20% | 31% | 93% | 5% | 2% |
| | n | 1754 | 733 | 1092 | 1221 | 64 | 32 |
| | Total | 3579 | 3579 | 3579 | 1317 | 1317 | 1317 |
| Visit a library close to where I live, work or study | % | 50% | 25% | 25% | 93% | 4% | 3% |
| | n | 1784 | 896 | 887 | 1225 | 46 | 42 |
| | Total | 3567 | 3567 | 3567 | 1313 | 1313 | 1313 |
| Access other council services or community activities | % | 41% | 39% | 20% | 77% | 21% | 2% |
| | n | 1442 | 1393 | 705 | 999 | 278 | 23 |
| | Total | 3540 | 3540 | 3540 | 1300 | 1300 | 1300 |

8.7 Users of these four libraries were also far less positive about the proposals to extend opening hours at proposed library hubs and community hubs, demonstrating almost universal opposition among users of these libraries to the trade-off in opening hours.

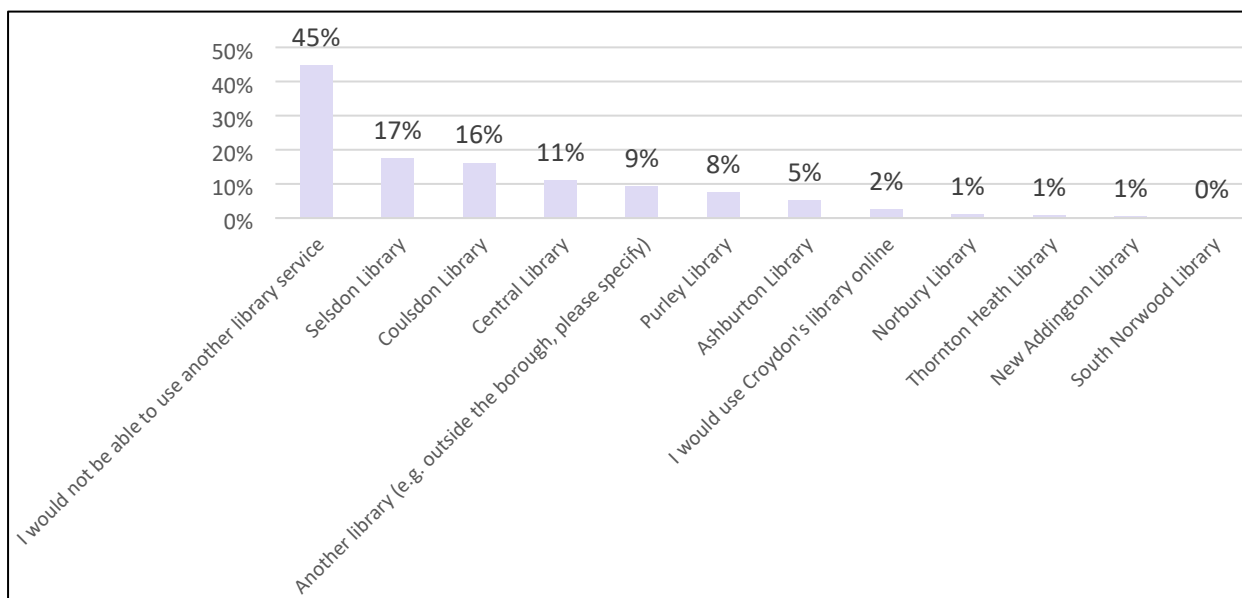
Figure 8.1: Response of users of four libraries proposed for closure to extending hours at library hubs and community hubs



Impact of proposed closures on those using these libraries

8.8 The survey asked those people whose primary library affiliation was one of the four libraries proposed for closure, Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead and Shirley libraries, whether they would be able to use another library in the event of these four libraries closing.

Figure 8.2: If four libraries were to close, which other libraries would you visit (1,303 responses)?



8.9 Nearly half of respondents (583, 45%) said they would not be able to use another library service.

8.10 A number of libraries outside the borough were mentioned as alternatives by 122 respondents - Caterham, Bromley, West Wickham (currently closed for refurbishment), Warlingham, Sutton, though several of these responses underlined they would need to drive or take public transport rather than walk.

8.11 Further analysis of these responses shows that proportion of respondents saying they would be unable to use another library service decreased with age (noting that the sample sizes for the youngest and oldest age cohorts were much smaller than the middle cohorts).

Table 8.2: 'Not able to visit another library' by age group

| Age group | Total | Not stated | 16-34 | 35-64 | 65+ | Prefer not to say |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|-------|-------|-----|-------------------|
| Total responses | 1303 | 34 | 125 | 690 | 312 | 142 |
| Number | 583 | 18 | 71 | 313 | 105 | 76 |
| % unable to visit another library | 45% | 53% | 57% | 45% | 34% | 54% |

8.12 An analysis of responses from users of each library proposed for closure reveals that 45% would be unable to visit another library, with a majority (58%) at Broad Green Library unable to visit another library (though of a much smaller sample (91 responses) than the other three libraries).

Table 8.3: If four libraries were to close, which other libraries would you visit? (By primary library affiliation)

| | Users of all proposed closure libraries | Bradmore Green Library users | Broad Green Library users | Sanderstead Library users | Shirley Library users |
|--|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ashburton Library | 5% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 28% |
| Central Library | 11% | 4% | 30% | 11% | 18% |
| Coulsdon Library | 16% | 46% | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| New Addington Library | 1% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 2% |
| Norbury Library | 1% | 0% | 8% | 0% | 2% |
| Purley Library | 8% | 7% | 1% | 12% | 1% |
| Selsdon Library | 17% | 1% | 0% | 40% | 1% |
| South Norwood Library | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Thornton Heath Library | 1% | 0% | 10% | 0% | 0% |
| I would use Croydon's library online | 2% | 2% | 4% | 2% | 3% |
| I would not be able to use another library service | 45% | 44% | 58% | 43% | 44% |
| Another library (e.g. outside the borough, please specify) | 9% | 11% | 1% | 5% | 21% |
| Total responses (exc. not stated) | 1.303 | 439 | 91 | 555 | 318 |

- 8.13 A much higher proportion (60%) of respondents with a disability responded said they would not be able to visit another library than those without a disability (39%).
- 8.14 The survey also asked users of the four libraries proposed for closure what type of facility they would prefer to visit to access a library outreach service in the event that their library was closed.

Table 8.4: Where would you find it convenient to access an outreach service (1,018 total responses)?

| Location: | No. |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Local Café | 303 |
| School or nursery | 299 |
| Family Hub | 118 |
| Leisure Centre | 106 |
| Local charity | 65 |
| College | 50 |
| Care Home | 8 |
| Somewhere else (please specify) | 329 |

- 8.15 Very few of those with a disability responded that they would find it convenient to access outreach services in any of the options provided, compared to those without a disability.
- 8.16 Among ‘somewhere else’ responses, the most frequent suggestions were within the following categories:
- Nowhere available in my community (keep library open)
 - A number of church venues
 - Coulsdon and Selsdon libraries
 - Supermarkets
 - Existing library sites run by volunteers
- 8.17 Several respondents registered concerns that alternative venues were either not free to access or had restricted access for safeguarding, unlike the principle of a universal public library.

Use of self-service access

- 8.18 Users of the four libraries proposed for closure were moderately more negative and sceptical about using self-service access (which has not yet been trialled at these libraries) than the responses overall.

Table 8.5: Responses to the use of self-service access

| | Total responses | Response of those using four libraries proposed for closure |
|--|-----------------|---|
| I've already used self-service access and really like it | 17% | 14% |
| I've used self-service access and didn't like it | 7% | 10% |
| I've not used self-service access but would give it a try if it means I can visit the library at a convenient time | 28% | 21% |
| I'd think about using self-service access but want to know more about how it works | 15% | 13% |
| I'd think about using self-service access but am concerned about safety | 10% | 11% |
| I would never visit a library outside of staffed hours | 21% | 30% |
| Total responses | 3,551 | 1,304 |

Petitions

- 8.19 In response to the consultation, the following petitions were received opposing the closure of these four libraries, totalling 5,504 signatories.

Table 8.5: List of petitions and signatories of petitions opposing library closures:

| Document | Total |
|--|--------------|
| Bradmore Green - 240412-Petition Bradmore Green Library | 421 |
| Bradmore Green - Young Voices Petition April 2024 | 259 |
| Broad Green - Petition_15042024111547 | 169 |
| Broad Green - Petition2_18042024164910 | 214 |
| Sanderstead - 240417-Save Sanderstead Library Petition | 1,141 |
| Save our Shirley Library petition (received after the closure of the formal consultation) | 3,300 |
| Total | 5,504 |

- 8.20 A petition (containing 7 x A4 pages of young peoples' signatures) was also received on behalf of Bradmore Green library users, stating the following:

“Please find attached a petition signed by (or in the case of the very young) on behalf of 243 children who live or have visited Old Coulsdon.

The children were asked if they wanted to the library to stay open. Every child asked said "yes", some were too shy to sign and were not pressured to do so the strength of feeling is more than the number of signatures indicates.

These children cannot run the library themselves; they are reliant on adults making the right decisions for them. We urge you to make the right decision and keep Bradmore Green library open.”

- 8.21 A second petition (containing 34 x A4 pages of signatures) was also received on behalf of Bradmore Green library users, stating the following:

“Petition Against the proposed closure of Bradmore Green library.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached a petition relating to the closure of Bradmore Green library following the recent decision to close the library due to council cut backs.

I am writing to you to ask for your help in stopping the closure of the above library. I - and many others - attended the meeting at the Coulsdon Congregational Church on 19" February.

The church was full, with standing along the sides and at the back. There were hundreds of local residents each with their own reasons to keep it open. It was heartwarming to be amongst so many like-minded souls. I was struck by the people who spoke from their hearts and souls about their individual needs for the library to remain, from those suffering mentally, physically and emotionally and needed the library for other reasons other than to borrow books. I had never thought about that before. Some people broke down in tears as they spoke, others were in tears just listening to them. It is easy to say "all you have to do is use the library in Coulsdon" but as a large percentage of people are elderly in Old Coulsdon that is not an option. Parking is difficult and there are many people using wheelchairs who need easy access to the library. There are never any roadside spaces available when you need them. There are also many young families in the area and this was well represented at the meeting by concerned young mums with children at Bradmore Green School. You try getting on a bus with two children and a buggy to go down to Coulsdon town to visit Coulsdon library. It is just not practical.

Something I never realised that came out of the meeting is all the people with 'invisible' needs who have mental problems both physiological and emotional that are desperate to keep that library open for their respective needs. They need that greeting, that pat on the back, that person who cares. A librarian is all those things. When one is inside the library everyone is equal, there is no judgement.

The school uses this library too. Not just to encourage children to handle and read books but to be respectful and mindful of the books, the people around them and of course to encourage them off their phones and broaden their minds. It isn't just a building with books inside it is a place that connects people to people, something that this world is sadly lacking. Please keep this wonderful place alive for us all in Old Coulsdon and the surrounding areas.”

- 8.22 In response to the consultation, a petition (containing 21 x A4 pages of signatures) was also received on behalf of Broad Green library users, stating the following:

“We, the residents, community and frequent users of the library's services are expressing our deep concern and opposition to Croydon Council's proposed closure of Broad Green Library as it would have devastating consequences for the residents of Croydon.

Broad Green Library serves as a vital hub for our community, offering essential programs and resources that contribute to the well-being and development of our residents. Every Monday and Thursday, a community organisation utilises the library space to provide crucial training programs and healthy lifestyle initiatives, including yoga sessions. These programs play a significant role in promoting skill development and fostering a sense of well-being among our residents. The potential closure of the library would not only disrupt these essential programs but also severely impact the accessibility of such crucial community services. This decision would particularly affect vulnerable populations in our community who rely on these services for support and enrichment.

Furthermore, Broad Green Library is situated in a deprived area of Croydon, and its closure would exacerbate the existing challenges faced by our community. Many ethnic books are housed in the library, catering to the diverse cultural backgrounds of our residents. It serves as a vital resource for ethnic communities, providing access to literature and information that is essential for cultural preservation and integration.

Moreover, the closure of the library would have a detrimental impact on efforts to address crime and anti-social behaviour in our community. With crime rates already high in the area, libraries play a crucial role in keeping our young people engaged and away from negative influences. The loss of such a valuable community asset would leave a significant void in our efforts to promote social cohesion and prevent anti-social behaviour.

Therefore, we urge Croydon Council to reconsider the proposal to close Broad Green Library and to explore alternative solutions that would allow this invaluable community resource to continue serving the residents of Croydon. Our community depends on the services and support provided by the library, and its closure would be a severe blow to the well-being and vitality of our neighbourhood. We trust that you will take the necessary steps to preserve Broad Green Library for the benefit of current and future generations.

- 8.23 A second petition (containing a further 16 x A4 pages of signatures) was also received on behalf of Broad Green library users, stating the following:

As a parent and resident of Croydon, I am deeply concerned about the proposed closure of Broad Green Library by the local council. This library is not just a building with books; it's a vibrant community hub where children discover the joy of reading, parents find resources to support their kids' education, and teachers access valuable materials for their lessons. It is also the only library in our area, serving many schools and residents.

Broad Green Library has been an integral part of our community for years. The thought that my children - along with countless others - may lose this source of knowledge and excitement is heart breaking. The dedicated staff at this establishment have created an environment that fosters learning and curiosity in our youth.

The closure will not only deprive us of these services but also remove a significant pillar of stability in our community. According to data from The Reading Agency (UK),

libraries play a crucial role in promoting literacy among children, with regular library users scoring higher on reading tests than non-users.

We understand that budget constraints are real; however, we believe that investing in our future generations should be prioritised over short-term savings. We urge Croydon Council to reconsider its decision and explore alternative solutions to keep Broad Green Library open.

Please join us in standing up for education, literacy, and community spirit by signing this petition today! Let's show Croydon Council how much we value Broad Green Library!

- 8.24 In response to the consultation, a petition (containing 61 x A4 pages of signatures) was also received on behalf of Sanderstead library users, stating the following:

“We, the undersigned are opposed to the closure of Sanderstead Library. We call on the Council to retain a staffed library and invest in and develop the building with and for the local community.”

- 8.25 A petition was also received from the Friends of Shirley Library after the end of the formal consultation on 13th September 2024, which we present below. Its signatories (5,504) have been included in the number of consultation responses.

Save our Shirley Library

- Shirley Library is under threat of closure from Croydon Council.
- We want a fully funded, properly staffed and stocked public library available to all members of our community.
- Join the Friends of Shirley Library by signing this petition to show your support.
- If you can offer practical support or want to make contact with the Friends of Shirley Library, please email: saveourshirleylibrary@gmail.com

- 8.26 From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged:

What will be the impact of closures for each community affected?

- 8.27 **Loss of the existing benefits provided by each library:** Responses exhibited strong support for the existing benefits provided to the local community at each library. Individual comments included:

- *Shirley:* “The library (is) a hub for the communications.”
- *Bradmore Green:* “(the) community wants access to books on shelves.”
- *Broad Green:* “This library is next to a school – you can’t hear yourself think just after school – feeding those young minds. Kid’s clubs are here.”
- *Sanderstead:* “people value face to face.”

- “The 20 minute community idea is what makes Sanderstead library work so well. It is a public space in Sanderstead which the community uses and deserves - there is no other. If you close it for the short term gain of selling the land (which is obviously what the Mayor plans) to repay the debt, you are depriving generations of a public space. It makes no sense to lose forever such a well-used public asset for meagre savings of £32k to put into other less used libraries elsewhere in the borough.”
[Consultation email response]

8.28 **The negative social impacts resulting from potential closures:** Frequent reference was made to the impact on community cohesion and loss of socialisation that would be result from any library. Individual comments included:

- *Shirley:* “If that library closes I don’t know what the future of Shirley will be, as far as having a community hub and library.”
- *Bradmore Green:* “There will be a knock on effect on people’s health as a result of closures – social care costs will increase.”
- *Broad Green:* “The Library is a safe space, and will have a negative impact on mental health.”
- *Sanderstead:* “lots of people will feel a loss.”

8.29 **Feelings that libraries had not been given appropriate support:** A handful of individuals felt that their local library had not been given appropriate support to maximise its potential as a Council asset. Individual comments included:

- *Shirley:* “We pay council tax, [some] people in Croydon will have better access than others.”
- *Bradmore Green:* “You want to take [away the library] and put the money somewhere else, and increase our Council tax again every year.”
- “Bradmore green library has the potential to be a hub for the local community, however it has been undervalued and underfunded by the council for many years. Now the councils greed is forcing the library to close. It’s a shame to lose a icon of OC heritage.” [Survey response]
- “It’s outrageous. Libraries have not been fully open or advertised so of course they are under used. We all need a local library. It’s so important. It’s not impossible. This model ignores Shrublands Estate. There is nothing on offer for these people often.” [Consultation Email response]
- “We at Sanderstead have a team of people ready to help maximise the functionality and use of the buildings at Sanderstead and we have the resources of the neighbourhood behind us. We can make a success of it here with minimum cost and maximum benefit to the Council. We don't want to lose this opportunity in Sanderstead. Once lost, gone forever.” [Consultation email response]

- *Sanderstead*: “We all support improvements to the service but here it’s a degradation.”
- “Accept and train volunteers. People have offered to volunteer at Shirley but not been contacted.” [Survey free text response]

8.30 **A handful of respondents did support the closure of libraries to release resources:**

- “If these libraries are not as well frequented I think it’s preferable to have longer hours at those that are. The areas are close enough together that you can quite easily access a local library if necessary.” [Survey free text response]
- “Great idea but any money made from selling these sites must be reinvested in the library service. Keep and redistribute all staff.” [Survey free text response]

What will be the specific impacts on people with protected characteristics?

8.31 From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged within individual comments:

Impact on older people:

- *Shirley*: “lots of elderly people at Shirley, some are on the pathway to dementia, and they can sit, have a cup of tea, do some knitting in a group, talk with others, and this is good. don’t have any money – there is not an alternative for this sort of thing.”
- *Bradmore Green*: “When you are over a certain age, and Old Coulsdon is known as an area with an older demographic, and when you are a mum with 3 small children, are you really going to take a bus to Coulsdon? No we need a library here.”
- *Broad Green*: “old people and young children – need toilet facilities.”
- *Sanderstead*: “elderly people, people with disabilities, who need a place like this.”
- “Sanderstead, according to the council’s EQIA document, has the highest percentage of people over 50, over 60 and over 70 of all the wards listed in your report on Croydon. It is age discrimination to plan to close Sanderstead library and negatively impact all the older people who use it.” [Consultation email response]

8.32 **Impact on younger people:**

- *Shirley*: “We teach kids and offer homework help and could operate in libraries.”
- *Sanderstead*: “More children are coming in – what else would we do in the holidays if the library closes?”

8.33 Impact on people with disabilities:

- *Shirley*: “How would you guarantee accessibility if residents are moving from site to site? How is that going to be accommodated?”
- *Bradmore Green*: “If I take my car down to Coulsdon with my wheelchair then I cannot get out of the car. It’s either Bradmore Green or nothing.”
- *Sanderstead*: “My husband has carried a woman’s book from bottom of stairs – she was struggling to get up the stairs. She wanted to talk to library staff and feel part of the community and say good morning and refer to other books – that’s what a library provide.”

8.34 Impact on those experiencing mental health or physical health challenges:

- *Shirley*: “We are all getting older, and the importance of being able to get out of your house where possible, and to be somewhere else for social activities is vital both on an individual basis, on a Croydon-wide basis, and nationally there is a big move towards recognising the negative impact on older people if this cannot be achieved.”
- *Bradmore Green*: “the library is the only place where everyone is equal, regardless of age, gender, financial means, culture, ability. The library is the only place where all those people can be together and be valued equally.”

8.35 Global communities:

- *Bradmore Green*: “Diversity – accepting.”
- *Broad Green*: “Go with the times – it’s different and people living here are not British English people – you have to understand that the majority of the people here are from abroad and we should cater for them with books.”

It will be difficult to access the services I need. I have children who need this library [Broad Green], and they need the activities in their library. They cannot go to another library. I cannot speak English well at other places and I am new to this country.” [Free text survey response]

8.36 Impact on people living on low incomes

- “This model ignores Shrublands Estate. There is nothing on offer for these people often.” [Survey free text response]

Which needs or groups are not currently being met or reached?

8.37 From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged through individual comments:

8.38 Opening hours:

- *Shirley*: “I personally think a library is not viable unless it is open on Saturdays.”

- *Sanderstead*: “Opening hours are not mitigating the situation – the chance of working people getting here is remote – needs to be borne in mind.”

8.39 **Location:**

- *Bradmore Green*: “Safe space after school for waiting for siblings/parents – convenience of being next door.”
- *Sanderstead*: “The library is on a very nice site but it could be developed.”

8.40 **Available services and resources:**

- *Shirley*: “you can keep warm... people come who don’t have computers at home.”
- *Bradmore Green*: “I think about people in reception here – 4 years old – they should be having the same life opportunities I had – they should be able to borrow books, have that learning instilled from reading, all the things and more, so in 20 years when they reach my age they should have that opportunity that I had and that I benefitted from.”
- *Broad Green*: “English, sewing classes, parenting, getting into work... yoga classes.”
- *Sanderstead*: “It’s 2024 – technology advanced so you need to give people what you want.”

8.41 **Promotion and marketing:**

- *Shirley*: “reasons for lack of usage based on opening hours and publicity.”
- *Broad Green*: “People are finding out from the community rather than from our publicity. Don’t think your social media is any good.”

8.42 **Physical fabric:**

- *Shirley*: “Shirley for 30 years and don’t remember it ever being refurbished, but Thornton Heath has been refurbished if not rebuilt 3, times.”
- *Sanderstead*: “Tatty old chairs and tables at different heights – perfectly captures how you have completely wrecked our library service under this administration and previous administrations.”

8.43 **Accessibility and safety:**

- *Shirley*: “fine when there was a toilet – Shirley Library is fully accessible. There is a ramp.”

- *Bradmore Green*: “People have had health problems since COVID, so dropping a book off to them is not going to cut it for people – they want to talk to people in the library.”
- *Broad Green*: “We need services for young people, there is difficulty with gangs and other issues. Murders.”
- *Sanderstead*: “Just had a young girl leave here after sitting here studying all day – so many students sitting around the tables.”
- “There's no parking in Coulsdon and it's no longer safe. There's an increase in knife point muggings. I know a lot of people who have unfortunately been subject to this. Bradmore green is accessible to older people, young families and members of the community.” [Consultation Email response]

Participants' views on the proposal for outreach as a mitigation

8.44 A **wide range of views** were expressed by participants in relation to the proposed future use of outreach, **both positive and negative, with some concerns raised about its effectiveness**. From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged within individual comments:

8.45 **Positive:**

- “proposals for outreach are very good. The report has also said libraries open 5 days a week and on Saturdays. This is excellent, very good, and we want to see that happen.” [Survey free text response]
- “Outreach into schools, nurseries, etc. Another way to get young people involved – [helping with younger ones].” [Survey free text response]
- “idea of outreach which I found working in deprived communities – mobile library can go anywhere.” [Survey free text response]
- “I've appreciated the language around needing to serve these communities better. I'm a primary school governor in Broad Green and would like to see schools engaged in designing the new Library Outreach programme.” [Consultation email response]
- “Link the library to the schools to learn/read/play monthly. Maybe there could be free workshops for the illiterate. Outreach and hold community classes through volunteering.” [Survey free text response]

8.46 **Negative:**

- *Shirley*: “If the library staff are already under pressure, an outreach service will stretch them even further.”

- *Bradmore Green*: “With outreach there would be a much smaller collection and someone else would be choosing what I would be reading, and that makes me very unhappy.”
- *Sanderstead*: “You mentioned outreach going out to schools – they already have state of art libraries, why do they need outreach?”
- “The idea of going to a nursery school or college is unrealistic as are care homes, they are not public spaces and have a duty of care to those who attend or reside in them. Safeguarding would be an issue.” [Survey free text response]
- *Sanderstead*: “In Coulsdon we do not have a leisure centre. In the last council election the conservative candidates promised our nearest leisure centre (Purley) would be re-opened within six months. This promise was broken.”
- “Most of these [options for outreach sites] don’t exist near me or are too expensive.” [Survey free text response]
- “There’s not many other places in Shirley where I can see a hub being created.” [Survey free text response]

8.47 A number of potential sites for library outreach were suggest through the range of consultation channels. These include: Sanderstead United Reform Church, West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church, the Fieldway Centre, Selsdon Centre for the retired.

What mitigations do people think can be put in place for those affected by closures?

8.48 From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged within individual comments:

8.49 Identifying new partners to take over the building or provide a replacement service:

- *Shirley*: “What about working with local partners to bring in funding?”
- *Bradmore Green*: “The community could run the building with support from the library service, there is an opportunity if residents come together.”
- *Broad Green*: “Why can’t community groups use these buildings at other times?”

8.50 Offering toilet facilities elsewhere:

- *Shirley*: “a lot of elderly people think about going out, and where there is a toilet. The public toilets by Shirley Library have been demolished, and it doesn’t look like they ever will be replaced. There is no public toilet in the library. It would be ideal if there was.”

8.51 **Reviewing budget decisions to prioritise libraries:**

- *Shirley*: “This proposal is based on a very short term financial situation. Once the building is closed and sold off, the building is gone forever. Is there an option for a fundraising programme. Could we all write to our local MP Sarah Jones?”
- *Bradmore Green*: “We should be increasing the use of libraries as you suggested, but some of that could bring in some money. We have additional services in some of the larger libraries such as Croydon Central, and some of those funds could go back to subsidise smaller libraries as well. Create enough income to keep this one – it’s valuable and we need it.”
- *Broad Green*: “is there any way you can juggle the budget in any other way? Cut spending elsewhere?”
- *Sanderstead*: “Could you close and hold for two years while you work on finances and then review.”

8.52 **Better prioritising available resources:**

- *Shirley*: “The Council could run the library in a different way, more vibrantly and community orientated. It’s well connected on the bus routes”
- *Bradmore Green*: “What other uses could the site have?”
- *Broad Green*: “When people come up with ideas that do not work, tell them - things like cafes, and they don’t work. Why would people want babies weighed in the library?”
- *Sanderstead*: “Why not close Purley – it’s inconvenient to get to and on a roundabout in the centre of Purley. Nowhere to park. “

8.53 **The use of technology, but overcoming first any initial distrust;** Individual comments included:

- *Bradmore Green*: “Could open+ work here to keep it open?”
- *Broad Green*: “Open+ -you don’t want people to find out about all the issues.”
- *Sanderstead*: “(ref: technology) We don’t need these machines.”

8.54 **Explore alternative opening hours,** Individual comments included:

- *Bradmore Green*: “Why can’t the library be open from 12noon to 8pm when people really need the library. Why can’t the library be open on a Saturday? You could open with a security guard”; “More opening hours - Later after school and 4 days a week.”
- *Sanderstead*: “You could close on week day and open on Sat.”

8.55 **The use of volunteers.** Individual comments included:

- *Shirley*: “Why don’t you increase hours with volunteers?”
- *Bradmore Green*: “What about having voluntary staff?”
- *Broad Green*: “ Suggest more volunteers to keep the library open. I come a long way to help people with their English as a volunteer.”
- *Sanderstead*: “volunteer force? You haven’t given them jobs in library that are worthwhile – volunteer staff quite capable of answering queries and handling returns.”
- “Volunteering groups to keep open the libraries that are closing.” [Survey free text response]
- “Perhaps the introduction of volunteers to staff some of the libraries at particular times could help.” [Survey free text response]
- “Establish local volunteer groups to sustain library services, enhancing community involvement and support without burdening the council financially.” [Survey free text response]

What support do people need to access library services? How do we reach people who aren't currently using library services?

8.56 From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged within individual comments:

8.57 **Transport and travel support:**

- *Shirley*: I don’t know if I’d get the bus to the nearest library. It would be two bus rides.”
- *Bradmore Green*: “Old Coulsdon is a very different place from Coulsdon. It’s not necessarily that easy to go to Coulsdon Library for services”; There’s nowhere to park in Coulsdon – Aldi are saying they won’t let people use their car park.”

8.58 **Provide replacement services, and or opening hours, elsewhere:**

- *Shirley*: “Reading group had to close when opening hours stopped service at 6pm.”
- *Sanderstead*: “Not about staff quality but numbers - we had specialists before - they have been replaced by people not trained at that level.”

8.59 **Service promotion and marketing:**

- *Broad Green*: ““I brought many young people in to use the library and they did not want to join.”

- *Sanderstead*: “My friend tried to get her children to join Sanderstead – website was absolutely hopeless.”

8.60 Environmental concerns:

- *Shirley*: “more car use if you go off to Ashburton or Selsdon from here!”

8.61 Accessibility concerns:

- *Shirley*: “Was mobility taken into consideration?”
- *Bradmore Green*: “you cannot just hop on a bus if you have a buggy and 4 children, and go to Coulsdon. You can get here on the flat, it’s a flat area.”
- *Broad Green*: “this is a community that will not travel, esp not if I had a child or a disability. I would not let a child walk and go on public transport from here?”

8.62 Safety concerns:

- *Bradmore Green*: “Bradmore Green Library is a safe environment to bring kids to. Coulsdon Town is not particularly safe – we saw a stabbing there – we need a secure place.”

8.63 Other concerns raised:

- *Bradmore Green*: “It strikes me that the people in this room are the people who are passionate about using the libraries and are the voice of the users of the library, and I don’t get a sense of where you are hearing the other voices who tell you that they want to use libraries and they can’t.”
- *Broad Green*: “Issues with new online catalogue.”
- *Sanderstead*: “the library app – what’s happening with the issues?”

Are there community partners who would be interested in taking over existing buildings?

8.64 From the range of consultation channels, the following key themes have emerged within individual comments:

8.65 Suggested partners to explore:

- *Shirley*: “talking about having a community interest group maybe acquiring the property.”
- *Bradmore Green*: “community centre? There could be some potential links with NHS, there is a GP’s surgery next door here, and commercial use, and of course other public sector possibilities.”
- *Broad Green*: “have one of the larger charities rather than a group of smaller groups who will argue.”

- *Sanderstead*: “We need a community hub here – library and develop with schools as much as possible.”

8.66 **Expressions of interest:** Individual comments included:

- *Shirley*: “interest in the Shirley area from community groups that said yes, they would be interested in taking on the Shirley Building in some form or other, so there are opportunities there.”
- *Bradmore Green*: “a proud history of forming friends’ groups for taking over services that the Council can no longer provide.”
- *Broad Green*: “I am the Chair of ARCC. What we want to do is basically get to know the community here – what do they want? Following today, how would I be able to have another consultation with the residents here?”
- *Sanderstead*: “How can we come together to share and work on a joint proposal?”

8.67 **Concerns about the idea in principle:** Individual comments included:

- *Shirley*: “would you make available to them the surveys of the building? It’s my understanding that the building has deep structural problems and needs money spending on it to make it long term safe.”
- *Bradmore Green*: ““I understand that Bradmore Green is a listed building, so there must be limitations over what you can do with that building.”
- *Broad Green*: “Building – Reference to agreement tied in with move from Mitcham Road There used to be a library on Mitcham Road, but it was knocked it down to build it here. The proviso was that it would be here for the local community.”
- *Sanderstead*: “when you’ve got different people putting forward proposals would you share with residents to look at opportunities to join up?”

Key issues to consider from consultation

8.68 In the table below, we have summarised our key findings from this section:

Table 8.6: Response to proposal to close four libraries – our key findings

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|--|
| <p>Response to the proposed closures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is almost universal opposition to closures and the permanent loss of community assets and a fear of the impact, particularly for those with specific needs or protected characteristics. • There is a significant community of existing users who prefer restricted hours at a convenient location, particularly one within walking distance. • There is a strong feeling among users of the libraries proposed for closure that they have been let down by the previous changes to hours. • There is a common view, particularly among users of the libraries directly affected, that they represent one of very few, or possibly the only, freely or easily accessible community assets. <p>The specific impacts on people with protected characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large number of responses identified a wide range of detrimental impacts on library users possessing protected characteristics as a result of the proposals being implemented, including older people; children and young families; disabled people; those facing mental health or physical health challenges, and global majority communities. For each library these were the groups most identified as at risk from the closure proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sanderstead Library: Older people, families with young children, disabled people ○ Shirley Library: Older people, disabled people, those on low incomes ○ Broad Green: Older people, global majority communities, those on low incomes ○ Bradmore Green: Disabled people, families with young children, those on low incomes <p>Needs of groups are not currently being served</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a widely-held view among both individuals but also community partners that the reduced opening hours are preventing many people from accessing the library service, particularly working families and children and young people, as well as an awareness that the library service currently isn't reaching many vulnerable people in the community who could benefit. |
|--|

- A large number of participants shared ideas about reaching more people not currently using the library service. These included transport and travel support; opening hours; better service promotion and marketing; improving safety.

Participants' views on outreach

A wide range of views were expressed on the potential for outreach to mitigate closures, with many people sceptical or negative, while some people did think that outreach would help some people access the library service who do not currently use it.

- There is some willingness to explore outreach models, but preferably from a continuing library building, and scepticism about alternative sites apart from faith-based organisations.

Mitigations that could be put in place in the events of closures:

- A number of people shared their thoughts about the possible ideas that could be put in place to mitigate the effects of the proposed closures. These included identifying new partners to take over the building or a community managed model; more use of self-service access with support for users to become more comfortable with it; exploring alternative opening hours; the use of volunteers; providing toilet facilities elsewhere.
- A significant number of people suggested in different ways deferring a decision about closures to review further the financial options.

Interest from partners and the community in managing buildings:

- There is considerable support among users and supporters of libraries proposed for closure to examine further potential alternative models to keep library buildings operating.
- A wide range of suggestions and ideas were shared by a number of people about potential community partners that be involved in running existing Shirley, Bradmore Green, Broad Green and Sanderstead library buildings and/or provide an alternative service from the site. However, a number of these also outlined their initial concerns about the idea in principle. Only a small number of formal EOIs were submitted following the consultation.

Annexes

Annex i

Full list of all engagement activities completed in chronological order

| Engagement area/Library | Date | Attendees | Meeting format |
|--|------------|-----------|--|
| Ashburton | 19/03/2024 | 2 | Drop In |
| Bradmore Green – proposed to close | 19/02/2024 | 150 | Public Meeting |
| | 20/02/2024 | 60 | Drop In |
| | 05/04/2024 | 200 | Drop In |
| | 02/04/2024 | 8 | Tollers Estate Youth Bus |
| | 18/04/2024 | 100 | Coulsdon C of E School visit |
| Broad Green – proposed to close | 17/02/2024 | 30 | Drop In |
| | 11/03/2024 | 4 | Public Meeting |
| | 15/04/2024 | 22 | Drop In |
| Central Library | 10/02/2024 | 29 | Drop In |
| | 11/04/2024 | 23 | Clocktower outreach on Central closed day |
| | 13/04/2024 | 112 | Central Library Saturday |
| Coulsdon | 18/03/2024 | 10 | Drop In |
| New Addington – proposed community hub | 23/02/2024 | 8 | Drop In |
| | 12/04/2024 | 10 | Drop In |
| | 11/04/2024 | 20 | Drop In Fieldway Community Centre HAF camps |
| | 18/03/2024 | 30 | ReNA (Renewing New Addington) |
| | 15/04/2024 | 30 | ReNA meeting 2 Fieldway Centre |
| Norbury (Open+) | 12/03/2024 | 3 | Drop In |
| | 13/03/2024 | 51 | Local Community Partnership regular meeting |
| | 05/04/2024 | 34 | Outreach |
| Purley – proposed community hub | 07/03/2024 | 26 | Drop In |
| | 27/03/2024 | 6 | Workshop (facilitated by Activist) |
| | 09/04/2024 | 46 | Drop In |
| Sanderstead – proposed to close | 20/02/2024 | 100 | Public Meeting |
| | 21/02/2024 | 25 | Drop In |
| | 08/04/2024 | 35 | Drop In |
| Selsdon (Open+) | 20/03/2024 | 46 | Drop In during Open+ hours |
| Shirley – proposed to close | 15/02/2024 | 50 | Public Meeting |
| | 16/02/2024 | 30 | Drop In |
| | 10/04/2024 | 32 | Drop In |
| | 02/04/2024 | 16 | Shrublands Estate Youth Bus outreach |
| South Norwood – proposed community hub | 04/03/2024 | 20 | SE 25 meeting |
| | 08/03/2024 | 20 | Drop In |
| | 06/04/2024 | 6 | Workshop (facilitated by Activist) |
| | 19/04/2024 | 48 | Drop In |
| | 03/04/2024 | 12 | Samuel Coleridge Taylor Centre HAF Camp outreach |
| Thornton Heath | 05/03/2024 | 25 | Drop In |
| | 03/04/2024 | 22 | Outreach |
| Other Engagement | 07/02/2024 | 90 | Initial Webinar |
| | 26/03/2024 | 13 live | Community Managed Libraries Webinar |

Consultation findings – June 2024

| Engagement area/Library | Date | Attendees | Meeting format |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------|--|
| | 02/04/2024 | 50 | Learning Disability Alliance Network Meeting |
| | 16/04/2024 | 16 | Learning Disability Coffee Morning |
| | 08/04/2024 | 4 | Layton Crescent Sheltered Housing |
| | 08/04/2024 | 4 | Central Library: ALD learners |
| | 17/04/2024 | 43 | Local Community Partnership (Central) |

Annex ii

The Library Campaign consultation response

The Library Campaign is the national charity that works to support public libraries.

We entirely sympathise about the Croydon library service's drastically low budget.

However, this consultation seems to be not so much a plan as a cry for help. Though backed by much information, it is almost entirely dependent on something turning up from "the community" or "partners".

Much liaising is apparently now going on with unspecified local entities. What they are, and the results of these efforts, is unknown.

Unless residents see what these alternatives are, they cannot judge this plan.

"Implementation from May 2024" has already been abandoned as a goal. Re-consultation seems unavoidable. And the key suggestion - closing libraries - has already been shown in numerous consultations to be extremely unpopular. It would seem that the status quo is likely to remain for some time.

To repeat - we entirely sympathise about the library service's drastically low budget. But closing four libraries is a poor remedy.

Libraries are much valued by Croydon residents - above "culture" when separately defined. They are correctly stated to be the "front door" to "culture", key to the "cultural eco-system" and to a host of core council services, especially for hard to reach communities.

Yet there seems to be disproportionate spending within the department on free-standing, ill-defined "culture" events in Croydon's centre (where most culture opportunities already are) rather than a solid offer in more accessible venues (usually libraries) across the borough. For instance:

1. Festival legacy - £850k mainly for events in the cultural growth zone + £377,500 for cultural growth zone. Total £1,227,500 in one year.

2. Two new culture officers with almost no library remit (minor collection care role only). £44,019 - £46,041pa + £47,040 - £49,083. Total pa - minimum £91,059; maximum £95,124.

NB: The London Borough of Culture has been criticised for insufficiently involving community groups or "partners". A better approach is needed.

LB Croydon also needs to recognise its reliance on accessible local libraries as its own frontline.

They help people use its services online (customer services, housing, applications for parking, bus passes etc). New research from Lorensbergs shows that other council services constitute the major demand for online support in libraries. It is clear from the consultation's documentation that this can be very demanding of staff, saving other council staff hours of work. Have other council departments been made aware of this? Is it not reasonable to request some payment?

In addition, new research by Suffolk County Council evaluates in strict cash terms the payback in health & mental wellbeing, school performance, use of council support etc. For different library functions the payback per £1 spent is an average of £6.07. But by far the biggest payback is the mere existence of the local library as a place to be and a base for other community activities - £22.91.

Closures would thus place extra demand on other council services including social services, early years, education, older people's welfare, youth services and more.

The benefit from closing four libraries seems paltry by comparison.

The chosen four seem to be among the lowest cost to run. As staff would be redeployed, the only cash saving is from other buildings requirements (£189kpa) - divided by 9 libraries, that makes an average £21k each.

It is very unclear what this pittance might be spent on, given the host of ideas in Appendix B and the various large costs incurred by closures (see below). Presumably the consultation hopes to get offers that would fill some gaps.

The consultation acknowledges that the closures would mean loss of users.

But apparently these same four libraries have identifiable superior “capacity” to provide “a more comprehensive library service via partners”. We await evidence of this.

It is worrying that a further three sites are to become “community hubs with a library service delivered as part of a wider offer”. At present it is impossible to know what might be on offer, or where, or at what cost. Much work, consultation and expense will be needed to determine this, let alone bring it into being. However, it is clear that library provision and space would unavoidably be reduced.

The service option currently in use - chosen via public consultation - was not to close any library but to reduce hours. This has not worked out, though it is fair to ask if a good choice of opening hours was made.

As the current model could have been designed to discourage attendance, it seems unwise to base calculations partly on attendance figures - especially as Appendix B says “more research is needed” into the decline in footfall (§ 3.5).

We do not have the detailed local knowledge needed to evaluate all the library sites, access, facilities etc. We are aware, however, that there are inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the current evaluations. We welcome the library service’s continued commitment to consultation, and suggest further evaluation based on this.

Similarly, we know nothing about alternative local venues - if any. However, they are likely to charge for hire, and some of those suggested (e.g., schools, care homes) will not welcome the general public, for safety reasons.

It is impossible to believe the four sites would not be sold in due course, as the current plan is to try first for alternative use at zero cost to the council. This is highly unlikely. People are aware of this.

Suggestions for “mitigation” by the library service are mostly uncosted but all very expensive: e.g., home delivery, outreach visits and “events”, “service points”, work in schools, servicing collections in unlikely locations, targeted further EIAs where libraries are to close, pilot “library links” (which apparently could mean a huge variety of things), enhanced digital offer (online books cost more to lend and offer far less choice).

Several of these are expensive per user in staff time (and stress), including travel time. This will eat into the value of redeploying staff from four previously rarely-open libraries.

Unexpected problems with less drastic mitigations prevented some hoped-for savings from the current model.

Other suggestions have very high up-front costs, including: work on the South Norwood building, relocations e.g. Purley, remodelling and moving libraries into “community hubs with a library offer”, conversion or furnishing of other buildings for library outreach use, work on buildings to enable room hire, “technological security systems”, building alterations, CCTV and permanent security staff on-site or remotely to enable further self-service.

The service has already tried in vain to raise the number of volunteers, with poor opening hours an extra barrier. It is acknowledged that any current contribution is to extra activities - not the core service.

“Community management” is also suggested. It is unclear what this means. However, experience shows that to survive, “community managed libraries” need intensive work to set up, and council support in perpetuity. In return, there is no evidence at all that such “libraries” can offer the real library service people need, or the skilled support for individuals that makes such savings for LB Croydon as a whole. The Libraries Service Review understands this.

We have had sight of a few ideas floated by well-meaning local people. It's clear they have no realistic concept of the possible funding required, or of likely fund-raising methods - still less of running anything that resembles a library.

Without local knowledge, we cannot comment on the availability of premises for decanting or co-locating current services. New Addington has not had a happy experience, with damage to the facilities both at the library and CALAT, and a resulting library service that is neither cheap nor well-used.

Unfortunately Croydon councillors seem over-optimistic, and inconsistent in their pronouncements at public meetings. They are over-optimistic in their expectations of likely savings, of alternative “models”, of possible partners, of possible venues and of the real value of offers of help from the community.

The library service itself is to be applauded for aspiring to offer a “wider” (though not clearly specified or costed) range of services. But all such aspirations depend on the release of extra funding, which seems impossible to identify. In the current emergency it might be better to get the basics right and see what can be done with the status quo.

Appendix B lists a number of improvement ideas under Outcomes 1 and 2 (Reaching People and Improving the Service to the Whole Community). Many of these offer real promise, real opportunities for community involvement and the locally tailored offers the public has asked for. But this will work only if based around a staffed library building.

Experience shows that many individuals and groups want to “help out”, but few are willing or able to commit to regular slots or basic service tasks. Efforts would be needed to have consistent staffing to organise each branch.

There is likely to be an enhanced public response around libraries threatened with closure. However, our suggested model would benefit other branches.

But here, ironically, the library service seems unprepared to loosen control or re-direct spending.

1.7 Outreach & marketing

- some ongoing deficiencies are sadly revealed in the current consultation.
- of more import, failure to publicise the service is a long-standing and now acknowledged problem.

Nothing is more important.

The suggestion is for 2 full-time staff @ £77k pa.

Yet Friends and wider community groups are well-placed to spread the message locally themselves, using their existing communication media, creativity and relations with hard to reach communities. This kind of hyper-local “last mile” publicity should be core to any publicity effort. Local posters, leaflets, social media and personal contacts are low-cost and effective.

There will be design talent in the community. Some free printing would go a long way.
NB: We do not think better promotion is “only effective if service is of sufficient quality”. The most basic library service offers much, to many people who don’t know about it.

2.1 More events/activities

The suggestion is for 1 full-time staffer @ £40k pa.

Again, Friends and local groups have ideas and capacity to run events, activities and clubs. This is a comparatively enjoyable and sociable use of time, that would build on their own talents and interests. Staff would facilitate, but the model would be a new one of working with, not for, their users.

The library would be seen as the place that offers opportunities to do your own thing, try out an idea, and seek like-minded people (Appendix A, § 6.16).

Groups might willingly raise targeted funds to buy A/V equipment, art supplies, games or whatever was needed for their chosen activities. This might even include moveable shelving and redecoration.

2.2 More community language provision

This is uncosted, but risks cutting into stock for general use.

Here again, local community groups could be well-placed to source, and happy to fund, special provision.

2.3 Improve signage, interiors

Some capital funding (£1.6m plus some smaller sums) is available, and a large programme of work is imagined. This might be profitably diverted to other needs.

The library service is perhaps too concerned about ensuring “good design” and a “consistent standard” across the service. Does Croydon want every branch to be different or not?

Redecorating is the kind of project that people enjoy, using their own ideas, and gives them a sense of ownership. Local businesses, colleges etc are likely to contribute in kind. We have seen some quite substantial offers at local meetings, including building work.

Such work might well suffice to make the library space fit to hire out, at least to local entities, saving further possible expenditure of £25k plus £25kpa, listed under 3.5.

These are just the most obvious ideas, given our lack of detailed local knowledge.

Several of them eliminate potential costed expenditure.

And they indicate a co-production approach that by definition will create value not yet imagined.

A more creative and collaborative use of staffed, static premises offers better savings, and a better service, than closures followed by an expensive and demanding “mitigation” programme in premises as yet unknown.

For staff, it offers a far less stressful work schedule. For the right person, co-producing a branch service would be an interesting and satisfying role. There has been much development work on these lines in the USA, leading to the production of numerous case histories, good practice toolkits and even training templates.

Croydon could build on this work, and justly claim to be pioneering a more modern way of working.

It might conceivably attract funding from grants or even LB Croydon for innovative work to deliver corporate objectives, as envisaged in Appendix A (§ 2.36).

This is perhaps a change of culture. It involves “letting go”, more autonomy for branches and ultimately absorbing the concept of working with people, not working for them.

We acknowledge that it will be demanding to establish the right staff and opening hours, but not half as demanding as planning multi-venue mitigations.

Consultation findings – June 2024

The library service is committed to consultation. Its current plan demonstrates openness to just about any idea. It should thus be open to a refreshed approach, retaining premises. This is more practicable and affordable than “close and mitigate”.

Annex iii

Survey questionnaire

Library services review consultation survey

How you use library services now

Q1. What is your postcode?

Note: Postcode data will be used to help us understand who we have and haven't heard from through the survey. You do not have to provide it, but if you do, you will not be identifiable in the survey analysis from your responses and any comments will be anonymous.

Q2. How often do you visit a library in Croydon? Please note -- not all questions are relevant for everyone to answer. Based on your initial answer to Q2 the survey guides you to the questions relevant to you. Please follow the instructions to skip questions where requested.

(Tick ✓ one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Frequently - more than once a week – skip to Q6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Regularly - once a week to once a month – skip to Q6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Occasionally - every few months or once a year – skip to Q6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rarely - I've not visited for more than a year – skip to Q5, then Q12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Never - I never visit – skip to Q5, then Q12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I use the home library service – skip to Q3, then Q12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I mainly use the library online – skip to Q4, then Q12 |

Q3. As well as the home library service which of the library online resources do you use?

((Tick ✓ all that apply)

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Ebooks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | E-audio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Newspapers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Research tools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Online learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Browsing the catalogue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reserving items online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) |

Library services review consultation survey

Q4. We'd like to know more about why you mostly use the online library? How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The library online is easy to use

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither agree nor disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly disagree |

The library online has a great range of materials to download

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither agree nor disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly disagree |

I prefer to read ebooks rather than printed books

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither agree nor disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly disagree |

I used to visit a library but it's not open at a convenient time

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat agree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither agree nor disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Strongly disagree |

Library services review consultation survey

Q5. What are the main reasons you do not use the library service in Croydon?

(Tick ✓ any 3 options)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I can find what I need online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I buy books when I want to read |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | The opening hours aren't convenient for me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't see any events that I would want to attend at libraries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | They don't have the range of books/materials that interest me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I've not felt welcome when I've visited |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Libraries aren't really for me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) |

Q6. Which library services do you use most often?

(Tick ✓ any 3 options)

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Downloading ebooks and other materials online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Online games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reading newspapers online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Online research tools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Borrowing books and other materials at a library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Attending learning activities at a library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Attending an arts or culture event at a library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Taking children to an activity at a library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Getting information or advice from staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Spaces available to hold events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) |

Q7. What is the most important motivation for you in using the library service? Select up to three options.

(Tick ✓ any 3 options)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Convenient opening hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Convenient location |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A good range of physical materials to borrow when I visit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Ease in finding what I want to download online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Interesting events happening at a library for me or my family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Having staff on hand to help and give advice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Being able to access other services while I'm there |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Getting out of the house and meeting people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Having a quiet place to read or study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Space to hold our own events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Being a place to keep warm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Access to using free computers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Access to free wifi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A good range of ebooks and other materials to download |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) |

Library services review consultation survey

Q8. Which library do you visit most often?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| | Ashburton Library |
| | Bradmore Green Library |
| | Broad Green Library |
| | Central Library |
| | Coulsdon Library |
| | New Addington Library |
| | Norbury Library |
| | Purley Library |
| | Sanderstead Library |
| | Selsdon Library |
| | Shirley Library |
| | South Norwood Library |
| | Thornton Heath Library |

Q9. If you also visit another library please tell us which one:

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--|---|
| | I don't use any other Croydon libraries |
| | Ashburton Library |
| | Bradmore Green Library |
| | Broad Green Library |
| | Central Library |
| | Coulsdon Library |
| | New Addington Library |
| | Norbury Library |
| | Purley Library |
| | Sanderstead Library |
| | Selsdon Library |
| | Shirley Library |
| | South Norwood Library |
| | Thornton Heath Library |

Library services review consultation survey

Please only answer Q10 and Q11 if you selected Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead or Shirley library in Q8.

Q10. If Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead and Shirley libraries were to close, tell us which other libraries you would be most likely to visit?

(Tick ✓ all that apply)

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Ashburton Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Central Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Coulsdon Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New Addington Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Norbury Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Purley Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Selsdon Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | South Norwood Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Thornton Heath Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I would use Croydon's library online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I would not be able to use another library service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Another library (e.g. outside the borough, please specify) |

Q11. If Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead and Shirley libraries were to close, where would you find it convenient to access an outreach library service?

(Tick ✓ all that apply)

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Leisure Centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family Hub |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Local charity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Local cafe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | School or nursery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | College |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Care Home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhere else (please specify) |

Library services review consultation survey

How the proposals would affect you

The council is proposing to deliver longer opening hours and more library events and activities from fewer buildings.

Central, Ashburton, Thornton Heath, Norbury, Selsdon and Coulsdon libraries are proposed to be open five to six days a week, including Saturdays, and will deliver an extensive offer of books, wifi, PCs, study spaces and events.

New Addington, Purley and South Norwood Libraries will be developed as part of a wider offer for residents such as family and adult education services and community partnerships and will include Saturday opening.

Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead, and Shirley are proposed to be closed to release funding for the offer to be improved at the other sites.

An outreach service is also proposed to reach residents who can't visit a library building and the online library will continue to be invested in and developed.

Q12. What impact will the proposed changes above have on your ability to do the following?

Visit a library at a time convenient for me

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a little harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It won't make much difference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a little easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not sure |

Visit a library close to where I live, work or study

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a little harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It won't make much difference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a little easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not sure |

Access other council services or community activities

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a little harder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It won't make much difference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a little easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not sure |

Library services review consultation survey

Q13. What overall difference do you think the proposals will make to the library service for people in Croydon?

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much worse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a bit worse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It won't make much difference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make things a bit better than now |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make things a lot better than now |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not sure |

Q14. The six proposed library hubs would be open 5 to 6 days a week, with the majority of hours staffed, and extended hours with self-service access.

What difference would this make to your ability to use the library more often?

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make no difference to me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it a bit easier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | It will make it much easier |

Q15. How positive or negative do you feel about the proposal to develop New Addington, Purley, and South Norwood libraries as new community hubs, run in partnership with other council services and community organisations?

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Very negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither negative nor positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Very positive |

Q16. Croydon has trialled self-service access at Norbury and Selsdon libraries. To extend opening hours at other libraries we are proposing to expand the use of self-service access.

Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I've already used self-service access and really like it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I've used self-service access and didn't like it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I've not used self-service access but would give it a try if it means I can visit the library at a convenient time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I'd think about using self-service access but want to know more about how it works |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I'd think about using self-service access but am concerned about safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I would never visit a library outside of staffed hours |

Library services review consultation survey

What you would like to see in the new service

Q17. If the six proposed Library hubs (Ashburton, Central, Coulsdon, Norbury, Selsdon, Thornton Heath) are open for more days and longer hours, what new activities would you most like to be available?

(Tick ✓ any three options)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Information and advice from staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Adult learning and education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Health and wellbeing activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Children and young people's activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Arts and culture events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Support to use computers and get online |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Something else (please specify) |

Q18. The three proposed 'community hubs' (New Addington, Purley, South Norwood) would include libraries as part of a wider offer delivered in partnership with other council services and community organisations. Which services would you prioritise alongside the library?

(Tick ✓ any three options)

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family support services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Health and wellbeing advice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Access to health services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Adult education classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Children's education classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Leisure services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Arts and cultural services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Community groups providing services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I need more information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Something else (please specify) |

Library services review consultation survey

Other ideas for improving the library service

Q19. What other comments do you have about the impact of the proposal to extend library opening hours?

Q20. What other comments do you have about the impact of closing Bradmore Green, Broad Green, Sanderstead and Shirley libraries?

Q21. What other suggestions do you have to improve library services without additional cost to the council?

Library services review consultation survey

About you

Please tell us a little bit about yourself. You do not have to answer these questions if you do not wish to, but if you do, it will be helpful for us to understand which groups and communities we are hearing from.

Q22. What is your sex? (a question about gender identity will follow if you are aged 16 or over)

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Female |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Male |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |

Q23. Are you aged 16 or over?

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes – go to Q24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No – go to Q25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |

Q24. This question is for respondents aged 16 and over: Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? (this question is voluntary)

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No – write in identity: |

Q25. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

(Tick any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Heterosexual/Straight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Gay/Lesbian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bi-Sexual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other sexual orientation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify) |

Library services review consultation survey

Q26. Which age range are you in?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16 – 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55 – 64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 20 – 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65 – 74 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 25 – 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 75 – 84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 35 – 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 85+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 45 – 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |

Q27. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | White Irish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | White Gypsy or Irish Traveller |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other White background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Black Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Black African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bangladeshi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other Asian background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Black African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Black Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other Black background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Arab |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) |

Q28. Currently, what is your legal marital or registered civil partnership status?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Never married and never registered a civil partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Married |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | In a registered civil partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Separated, but still legally married |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Separated, but still legally in a civil partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Divorced |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Widowed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Surviving partner from a registered civil partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |

Library services review consultation survey

Q29. Have you or your partner had a baby in the last 12 months?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| | Yes |
| | No |
| | Prefer not to say |

Disability

The Equality Act 2010 defines someone as a disabled person if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

A disability may include progressive conditions such as HIV and cancer, mobility, sight or hearing impairments or mental health issues such as depression.

In considering whether you have a disability you should not take into account the effect of any medication or treatments used or adaptations made which reduce the effects of an impairments (other than glasses or contact lenses used to correct a visual impairment)

Q20. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| | Yes – go to Q21 |
| | No – go to Q22 |
| | Prefer not to say |

Q21. Please select the disability(ies) you consider yourself to have:

(Tick ✓ all that apply)

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| | Visually Impaired |
| | Hearing Impaired |
| | Mobility disability |
| | Learning disability |
| | Communication difficulty |
| | Hidden disability: autism (ASD) |
| | Hidden disability: ADHD |
| | Hidden disability: Asthma |
| | Hidden disability: Epilepsy |
| | Hidden disability: Diabetes |
| | Hidden disability: Sickle cell |
| | Prefer not to say |
| | Other (please specify) |

Library services review consultation survey

Q22. What is your religion?

(Tick ✓ any one option)

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Baha'i |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Buddhist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Christian (including church of England/Catholic/Protestant and all other denominations) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hindu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Jain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Jewish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Muslim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sikh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) |