

Title of Report:

Wash Common Library

Item 3

Report to be considered by: Council

Purpose of Report:

To provide operational and performance information about Wash Common Library.

Recommended Action:

Reason for decision to be taken:

- Members have requested a meeting to discuss the decision to close the library.

List of other options considered:

- None

Key background documentation:

- None

Portfolio Member: Councillor Mike Rodger

Tel. No.: 01635 35001

E-mail Address: Mrodger@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details

Name: Christine Owen

Job Title: Library and Information Strategic
Development Manager

Tel. No.: 01635 519904

E-mail Address: cowen@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 Wash Common Library budget for 2003/4 was £22,780 of which £21,270 was staff costs.
- 1.2 The use of Wash Common library in 2003/4 compared with 2002/3 shows an increase of 13.75 % in number of items borrowed and a decrease in visitor figures from 13000 in 2002/3 to 10600 in 2004/5. Almost all other libraries in West Berkshire are showing a pattern of increasing visitors and decreasing items borrowed.
- 1.3 The cost per issue from Wash Common is £1.34. The cheapest library cost per issue is Pangbourne at 81p, the most expensive is the mobile library service at £1.41. The details are shown in the attached table.
- 1.4 Three staff were employed at Wash Common. The library assistant and supervisor have been re-deployed to vacant posts at Newbury library. The cleaner has been made redundant. Should the library reopen the re-deployed staff will be offered the opportunity to return to Wash Common or new staff will be recruited if they choose not to.
- 1.5 As a result of the Council's decision on 1 March 2004, alternative services in the form of a mobile library are being provided to the Wash Common area for an average of nearly 2 hours a week. This is commensurate with services delivered elsewhere by the mobile service. This is at no additional cost but has resulted in a reduced service being provided to Compton (which now receives a service in line with other communities) and Purley (where the evening visit introduced in 2003 had not proved popular, Purley still receives a day time visit).
- 1.6 Anyone unable to visit the mobile library will be entitled to receive a home visit from the housebound library service. Two people have already started to receive this service.
- 1.7 Should the library be re-opened no costs will be incurred as the premises has been left untouched awaiting the outcome of this discussion.
- 1.8 Attached at Appendix 3(b) is the Conservative Group's financial options paper containing proposals to fund the retention of the Wash Common Library.

Appendices

Appendix 3(a) – Table of statistical information comparing library performance across West Berkshire for 2003/4.

Appendix 3(b) – Conservative Group Report – Financial Options to save Wash Common library.

Implications

- Policy:** The closure of Wash Common Library would have a negative impact on the service's performance against the national library standards, specifically those on opening hours, distance of travel to a library and visitors. The Position Statement for 2004 may also receive a lower score as a result of a service cut having occurred. The Position Statement score contributes to the Council's overall CPA rating.
- Financial:** Confirmation of the decision taken by Council on the 1st March to close the library will have no budgetary implications. The decision to keep the service running will require the funding of £22,000 to be identified.
- Personnel:** Staff from Wash Common have been re-deployed elsewhere in vacant posts.
- Legal:** None
- Property:** The library service is provided in a container which has a limited lifespan. The retention of the service will lead to a need for expenditure in the future to replace the container in some way when it is no longer viable.
- Risk Management:** None