

West Berkshire Libraries: Needs assessment



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Executive summary

You have asked us to conduct a needs assessment for your library service to inform the decisions you will be taking in meeting your target of a significant reduction in the service budget, while continuing to provide a service that is compliant with your statutory obligations and is focused on the needs of the community and relevant demographic groups.

We have found that the network of libraries as it currently stands is able to meet people's needs and is compliant with the Public Library and Museums Act 1964, and the current service is highly valued by communities. Libraries are seen as providing a place (sometimes the only place) where local people can meet, access services and come together as a community.

Our analysis of the library service budgets shows that the service is relatively expensive to run and there is scope for in-house savings. These could make a useful contribution to the savings needed. However, it is clear to us that you cannot continue to maintain a network of nine libraries in the same way as you have done in the past within the new budget constraints.

To continue to meet community needs you should make every effort to maintain the current network, or if that is not possible, reduce it as little as possible. Your aim must be to have a network of library branches that are accessible to residents and which provide a core library service as well as targeted offers to meet specific needs.

You may wish to explore different ways to provide the service, as have been adopted elsewhere in the country, drawing on the goodwill of your communities to support you, which we have observed throughout our engagement.

Should it prove necessary to close any libraries, despite your best efforts, then mitigating action should be taken to meet needs through, for example, a review of mobile library stops (location, frequency, duration).

Introduction

You have asked us to conduct a needs assessment for your library service to inform the decisions you will be taking in meeting your target of a significant reduction in the service budget (currently £1.5M). You want to be sure that you can continue to provide a service that is compliant with your statutory obligations under the Public Library and Museums Act 1964 and the Equality Act 2010, and to focus provision on the needs of the community and relevant demographic groups.

In this report we consider the value to communities of public libraries and the way in which their services can be targeted at meeting community needs – and hence, the importance of properly assessing those needs and shaping services around them. We describe our approach to understanding needs in West Berkshire and provide a library by library analysis of needs in each catchment area and current service provision to meet those needs.

In compiling this report, we are grateful to Mike Brook and his team in the library service for responding promptly and fully to all requests for information and data. We are also grateful for the willingness of many people to make themselves available to talk about the service, including:

- Project board members;
- Users at all the libraries;
- Library staff;
- Representatives of WBC services:
 - Adult Community and Family Learning;
 - Adult and Children's Services;
 - Leisure;
 - Heritage and Culture;
 - Public Health attendees at Shaw House meeting; and
- Representatives of parish councils and friends' groups at the same meeting

1 Background: the value of libraries

In the current financial climate, local authorities are facing unprecedented savings targets. The challenge now is no longer to do more with less, but to innovate and do things differently with less. Looking at efficiencies in a positive way can be challenging, and collaborative ventures can be a way forward in ensuring that high quality and value for money services are maintained. Alternative models of governance and service delivery are emerging across the country and there are many examples, good and not so good, to learn from. However hard they are, we believe that these challenges can be approached with creativity and innovation.

The way library services are provided is developing rapidly as technology, communities and expectations change. We believe that the strategic priorities of the public library sector are increasingly in line with those of national and local government and that this is a positive development.

In addition to the traditional focus on books and information (while these are still of course core business), library services now can and often do play a key role in delivering against council priorities – a role that is increasingly recognised within the local authority. For example:

- With the decrease of face to face contact with customers in many parts of local authorities, libraries now have an increasing role as the public face of the council;
- Digital empowerment, especially in rural areas, is a key priority for local authorities and libraries can be instrumental in both providing free internet access, wifi and training for customers;
- Reading, writing, cultural and social activities all contribute to improving people's wellbeing. The successful projects between libraries and mental health organisations are a good example of this;
- Libraries provide access to learning for all ages and opportunities for volunteering and work experience. All this improves education and employment opportunities for residents;
- Libraries make a substantial contribution to early years' provision and family literacy through regular events and national schemes, such as the summer reading challenge; and
- The safe neutral space of a library is ideal for communities to get together and get involved. Library-based activities, whether organised by the staff or by communities themselves, provide an important opportunity for local people to interact, build mutual understanding and trust, and minimise the impacts of loneliness and isolation.

One of the most exciting recent developments is the emergence of a more cohesive, largely practitioner led, national strategy for public libraries. Perhaps reflecting the closer allegiance between public libraries and other public services, a number of national initiatives are championing the wider role that libraries can play in daily life.

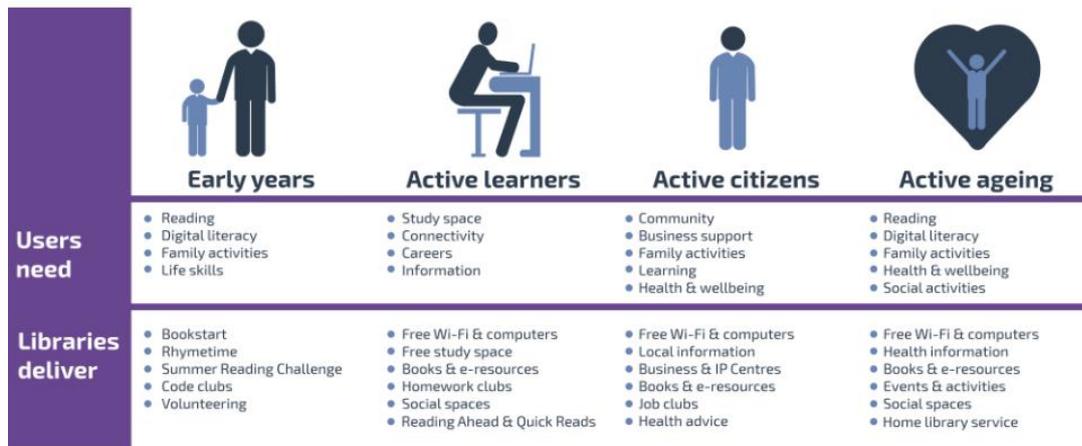
1.1 The Libraries Taskforce

The DCMS Libraries Taskforce has recently issued the draft of its Ambition strategy for public libraries and says:

‘In our vision for the 21st century, we see the purpose of the public library network as contributing to the delivery of 7 areas:

- reading and literacy;
- digital literacy;
- health and wellbeing;
- economic growth;
- culture and creativity;
- communities; and
- learning

The basic offer from public libraries is set out in a new way that reflects the priorities of local authorities, illustrated in the image below:



Publication of the final Ambition document, following extensive consultation, has been delayed by changes at DCMS following the Brexit vote which led to a new Prime Minister in Theresa May, and a government reshuffle that has seen Rob Wilson take over as the Minister responsible for libraries, moving from the Cabinet Office to do so (and bringing with him his previous role as Minister for Civil Society). The new minister has said that he wishes to take a bit of time to review the document, visit some libraries and talk to colleagues, before publication.

1.2 Universal Offers

The Society of Chief Librarians has, in partnership with others (including Arts Council England and The Reading Agency) developed five Universal Offers. These cover the five key

areas of service which customers and stakeholders see as essential to a 21st century library service:

- Reading;
- Information;
- Digital;
- Health; and
- Learning

The aim of the offers is to develop a core package of partnerships, resources and advocacy messages at a national level which can then be delivered locally and shaped to meet differing local needs. The Universal Offers provide a positive vision for the future of public libraries and a commitment to quality provision across these five core areas of our service. This national approach brings consistency and is cost effective. SCL coordinate activity to ensure that costs and resources are shared and that the offers provide value for money. The aim is to avoid the duplication of energy and funds that would be needed to develop individual offers/schemes across 151 individual library authorities.

The national approach also attracts funding, such as the recent backing of the health and reading offers from Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust. The Universal Offers also provide a platform for coordinated advocacy for the sector, joining up national and local messages about the contribution public libraries make.

You are already working with these national offers in West Berkshire and we would recommend that you continue to do so. A national approach brings consistency and is cost effective.

2 Background: meeting residents' needs

As a universal service with statutory obligations, public library services need to ensure that they are providing a 'comprehensive and efficient' service that meets the needs of the population. When significant changes are planned to a library service, especially reductions in service (closure of library branches, curtailment of opening hours, removal of some service offers) it is essential that these are based on a clear understanding of local needs and that any negative impact on the service's ability to respond to those needs is minimised. Additionally, any new service strategy should similarly be underpinned by an evidence based analysis of need.

A needs assessment also helps ensure compliance with the public sector equality duty (PSED) set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty relates to different groups who share any of the "protective characteristic" of age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation. The Equality Act outlines that due regard involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

2.1 Understanding the impact of libraries on needs

There have been a number of reports and studies looking at the impact of libraries on various areas of need. A selection of these are summarised below.

Economic/financial impact

Literacy skills whether traditional or digital, underpin success in all walks of life, and libraries have a key role to play in ensuring that children in particular have the building-blocks for future academic and employment success. A longitudinal study by Nuffield College, Oxford¹, found that, of all the free-time activities teenagers do, reading is the only activity that appears to help them secure a good job.

A 2011 research report by the DFE, 'Investigating the role of language in children's early educational outcomes'², looked at the importance of early communication skills in preparing children for school, and concluded that 'The number of books available to the child, the frequency of visits to the library, parents teaching a range of activities and the number of toys available are all important predictors of the child's expressive vocabulary at 2 years.' Furthermore, creating a good communication environment through these activities is 'a more dominant predictor of early language than social background'.

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/8435031/Reading-as-teenager-gets-you-a-better-job.html>

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181549/DFE-RR134.pdf

This report drew on data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), 'Children of the Nineties', a study of a birth cohort initiated in the early 1990s, which provides one of the richest sources of data about the home background and early experiences of children as well as assessment of their abilities as they enter school. It recognises that, 'those children who owned more books and were taken to the library more frequently at age 2 achieved higher scores on the school assessment when entering primary school'.

In December 2011 the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) published a report, 'New Challenges, New Chances; the Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System'³. The objectives cited included focusing public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including those in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills, with the intention to 'support access, and progression in its widest sense, for people who are disadvantaged and who are furthest from learning and therefore least likely to participate.' These audiences for learning are among those whom public libraries are arguably well-positioned to serve.

Social/community impact

To quote Public Library News⁴:

'Life is unequal because prices and incomes are unequal. Public libraries partially came about because it was recognised that this inequality meant that some people who most needed books were being denied them. This was not an altruistic act on the part of the Victorians and later generations. Rather, it was an enlightened realisation that the country would benefit if all could have access to the immense educational, democratic and social welfare advantages of the book and the newspaper. Children of even the very poor could, with the help of their local public library, learn all that even the most privileged child could and thus go on to great things, providing a meritocracy of great economic benefit to the nation. Similarly, working people would have a positive outlet for their energies and could learn what they needed to learn, regardless of their financial resources. They could then go on to better things, again to the nation's benefit. Finally, the elderly could have access to the universe of knowledge and fiction, which would be of immense benefit to their social welfare.'

A 2010 study by researchers at the University of Strathclyde, 'Public libraries as impartial spaces in a consumer society: possible, plausible, desirable?'⁵, looked at the changing role of public libraries in an increasingly commercial world and concluded that 'the role of the public library is to provide a space promoting community knowledge, citizenship, personal growth, democratic access to information, building trust and challenging preconceived ideas' and that therefore they 'should strive to retain their impartiality'.

³ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmbis/557/55702.htm>

⁴ <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/>

⁵ <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/03074801011094831>

Personal/individual impact

Libraries have a positive impact on individuals' health and well-being. The Reading Agency's evaluation of the first year of the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme found that:

- 91% of service users surveyed said the book they had read had been helpful; 79% said it had helped them understand more about their condition, 73% said it had helped them feel more confident about managing their symptoms, and 37% said that their symptoms had reduced or got better.
- All prescribers surveyed agreed the scheme had been helpful for patients. Nearly all said that the recommended reading had helped people feel more confident about managing their symptoms.
- Just under half of prescribers surveyed felt the scheme had saved them consultation time. Other identified benefits include greater patient insight and learning, help with recovery, treatment in line with the stepped care model, and reduction in the need to refer on for further care.

As well as the individual impact there is also of course a societal impact here, as keeping people healthy reduces pressure on the NHS and its funding. Public Health Devon carried out an evaluation of the scheme there⁶ and concluded that 'working in partnership with the libraries is an effective delivery model to reaches all groups of the population including those in lower socioeconomic groups' and that 'there is reasonable evidence that the scheme reaches those where the prevalence of mental ill health is higher.'

Understanding where libraries make the difference

While most of the studies cited above, and many others, are focused on understanding the impact of public libraries, it is important to note that it can be difficult to isolate their impact from that of other institutions working to similar objectives. Studies that use qualitative evidence, that involve participants and that are carried out over a period of time tend all to be more successful in identifying library-specific benefits. It is also helpful to make use of proxy measures where appropriate; for example, if reading books has a beneficial impact on a teenager's chances of employment success, as described above, and if public libraries lend books to teenagers and provide programmes that encourage them to read, which they do, we can conclude that public libraries make an important contribution to young people's employability and life chances.

Studies which don't show a causal link between public library activity and impacts, and which cannot demonstrate clear proxies, should be regarded with caution, but may not necessarily be wrong in their claims.

⁶ Available to download from <https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/impact/research/reading-well-books-on-prescription-scheme-evidence-base.html>

3 West Berkshire: library service aims and objectives

The service aims to provide an effective, modern and relevant library service to the people of West Berkshire, contributing to the Council's key objectives:

Corporate objective	Library purpose	Activities
Better educated communities	Encourage literacy, learning and access to knowledge	<p>Provide a good range of digital and print resources</p> <p>Employ staff with the expertise to help</p> <p>Facilitate study and research</p> <p>Provide activities targeted at early years and school-age children, e.g. Bookstart, Rhyme-time and Storytime, Family Learning, Summer Reading Challenge, class visits etc.</p> <p>Work with partners to provide learning opportunities</p>
A stronger local economy	Provide information and services to help individuals to thrive	<p>Mediated access to a wide range of information</p> <p>Digital access</p> <p>Teach ICT skills</p> <p>Access to information for those seeking employment</p> <p>Support for SMEs and business start-ups</p>
Supporting those who need it	Provide libraries as safe, welcoming and inclusive places and services that support the most vulnerable	<p>Targeted services for vulnerable people, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books on Prescription • Reminiscence work <p>Enable more vulnerable to access universal services via Mobile and At Home library services Health information and signposting to health services</p>
Stronger, more resilient communities	Libraries as hubs of their community, contributing to quality of life and sense of place	<p>Provide activities that bring local people together</p> <p>Host events and activities for adults and children run by local groups</p> <p>Facilitate interest groups for adults and children</p>

		<p>Provide volunteering opportunities and support volunteers</p> <p>Help communities learn about their past through collections and events</p>
A more effective Council	Libraries as the front door to the council	<p>Work with council partners to widen access to council services</p> <p>Offer venues and facilities for a wide range of activities</p>

The assessment of needs which follows must be seen in the context of the above, which helps to illustrate those needs to which the library service is best placed to respond.

4 West Berkshire: needs assessment

4.1 What we did

In order to develop a full picture of those needs of West Berkshire communities to which the library service does and/or could provide a response, we reviewed all available data on the library service and on the authority as a whole, including:

- service-specific policies and plans;
- relevant council-wide reports;
- reports of recent user feedback;
- CIPFA returns;
- demographic information;
- active users v. total population per library catchment area and across the borough as a whole, as well as for the home library service;
- usage patterns of each library (overall levels of use broken down by broad demographic groups);
- overall budget broken down against main headings (staff, buildings, stock, IT, council recharges, etc.); and
- income levels

We produced detailed datasets for each library (included in Appendix D) as well as an overall financial review of the current service (Appendix C). Our analysis of financial and service data informed a 'value for money' assessment of the current library service which can be used to benchmark proposed future alternative models

We engaged with a number of internal stakeholders across the council including staff, in order to explore the role libraries can play in delivering other services. While public consultation did not form part of this assessment, we also engaged with a number of external stakeholders and library users via drop-in sessions in each library. An initial meeting was held for those town and parish councils where libraries are currently located, and friends' groups were also invited to this meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to inform attendees about the process taking place and also to gauge support from these stakeholders.

We also reviewed good practice in the public sector elsewhere, looking in particular at where innovation had enabled efficiency savings as well as service enhancements, and this has informed our recommendations for possible future service models.

4.2 Financial summary: value for money appraisal

This section focuses on comparisons between West Berkshire Library Service (WBLS) and other library authorities that are similar both demographically and in the pressures that they face. This gives an indication of the value for money which WBLS provides.

Within individual library authorities there are often considerable variations between the performance and costs of individual library branches and services. Also, these are generally not reported through CIPFA but can be analysed through internal service data. The second part of this section therefore focuses on variations within WBLs and gives an indication of how effective spending is within the service.

However, any comparisons either at a local or wider level can only be regarded as indicative. Different accounting regimes in different authorities can distort the picture and the exact nature and quality of the service provided is not always reflected in derived figures. The latest available CIPFA comparative data is also for 2014/15, and in a world where local government resources are shrinking quickly other authorities are likely to have changed during the last year. It is nonetheless possible to identify areas where costs are considerably different from the average to determine relative value for money and to indicate areas for improvement.

To establish value for money West Berkshire Library Service was compared with a number of other services in southern England serving similar areas and populations. West Berkshire is providing slightly more libraries per resident than the average for the group, although the opening hours per resident are slightly lower than average. Visits per resident were low compared to the average for the comparator group, although issues were above average.

A full summary of our work in respect of the value for money assessment is included as Appendix C, while here we pick out some of the most significant points.

Expenditure by population

We examined how West Berkshire invests in its library service compared to the average for other authorities in the group and relative to their populations. Whilst nowhere near as high as Bracknell Forest or Windsor and Maidenhead, you are spending considerably more per capita than most authorities in the comparator group, and investing above the average in most spending categories; this is particularly the case in staffing and premises. Investment in transport, whilst only a very small proportion of the overall investment, is four times the average for the group.

Provision of libraries

West Berkshire is providing slightly more libraries per resident than the average for the group, although the opening hours per resident are slightly lower than average. The number of visits per hour offered is low although the issues per hour is above average.

Usage by population

Visits to West Berkshire libraries per resident are low compared to the average for the comparator group, although issues are above average. The usage of library computers is on the low side and the number of housebound users below average, although this figure is distorted by some relatively high returns from some authorities.

Provision of staff

Staffing is the single highest element of expenditure in any library service and it is vitally important that staffing costs are controlled to achieve value for money. The number of staff provided in West Berkshire is slightly above the average for the comparator group.

The average cost per member of staff is 50% higher than the average for the comparator group⁷. Staff costs per visitor are high, although as WBLs has a high proportion of issues to visits, the staff cost per issue is lower, while still well above the average for the group. Similarly, staffing costs for each hour open are high, indicating that staffing levels may need to be reviewed.

Staff productivity

The pattern observed previously where WBLs performs better in relation to issues than to visits is reflected in staff productivity figures, so that the number of visits per member of staff is well below the average but the issues per member of staff is above average

Stock efficiency

Although West Berkshire has relatively high issues per resident and per visit, the spending on stock is high. The return on stock investment in West Berkshire – at 27p per issue – is worse than the average for the comparator authorities of 19p. This may in part reflect higher levels of spending on expensive formats (such as DVDs) or on resources which, although valuable to the public, do not result in issues like newspapers or online resources. The average cost of non-book items added to stock in 2014/15 was £25.54, reflecting the high spend on adult talking books, and although not all comparator authorities provided data, this appears well above the likely average. Similarly, the cost paid per book is on the high side for the comparator groups, although only just above average nationally. The size of the stock team appears to be high in relation to the size of the authority.

Premises costs

Property costs appear rather high, and nearly half of the spend on premises is at Newbury Library. The cost of premises per library is in line with other authorities, but the premises cost per resident is high, partially accounted for by a relatively generous provision of library branches in West Berkshire; and, since the number of visits per resident is comparatively low, the premises cost per visit is high.

Computing, transport, other supplies and services and support costs

These budget headings together account for almost a quarter of gross revenue spend in West Berkshire, with the great majority in support service costs. Computing cost are high in relation to other services. This is partly due to the state of the market in library management system supply, where prices to a smaller library service are not significantly different to those for a larger service. Other supplies and services are generally items that can be controlled fully by the library service and are in line with other authorities. Transport costs are high, due largely to the provision of the two mobile libraries; however, transport is only a very small proportion of the total budget.

Revenue income

Revenue income in WBLs is average compared to comparators but is higher when adjusted for customer levels. West Berkshire does not charge fees for reservations or any electronic services. These represent very small amounts in the overall service budget and it may be

⁷ This figure is skewed by an extraordinarily low cost in Wiltshire, but even if that figure is excluded West Berkshire is well above average

that WBLs considers these concessions a useful contribution to the library offer. West Berkshire is doing well in collecting overdue fees and for the hire of audio visual stock.

Perhaps the most significant issue in the analysis of income is the lack of income from lettings in West Berkshire. This is of course not only dependent on local charging policies but also on the availability of space for hire. However, for a service which has a number of libraries which are not open for long hours, there is the potential to make better use of the space during closed times through hire of the facilities.

Value for money

The ultimate determinate of the value that a library service delivers is the cost for each visit. Amongst its comparator group, West Berkshire is at the high end of its comparator group. There are a number of reasons for this which have been discussed above, but this metric is determined by the number of visits to the service, and this is low in comparison to other authorities. Cost per issue is also high, although the difference here is less marked, whilst the cost per library is more in line with other library services.

There are a number of budget headings where West Berkshire is performing well or at the average, but others where there could be a need for improved efficiency. Staffing costs are high and by some measures productivity is low. Whilst volunteers are already being engaged, there is scope for increasing numbers. West Berkshire's customers clearly value the stock provided, as indicated by the high number of issues per visit, but the return on stock investment could be improved. Premises costs, too, are high due to the large number of libraries with short hours and low visits and issues. Revenue income is good, but if it is possible to rent out space this could be improved. The revenue budget for 2015/16 is considerably lower than that for the previous year and it is likely that there will be improvement in comparative performance when the next CIPFA figures are released.

4.3 Demographic summary

Population profile

West Berkshire is diverse in its characteristics, with a heavily populated area along the Kennet valley centred on Newbury, a rather less densely populated area by the Thames, and with sparsely populated downland to the north of Newbury and an area of both small and larger villages to the south. The boundary between West Berkshire and Reading would not be obvious to the casual observer, as the urban area continues on both sides of the border. Whilst Newbury is the largest town and a focal point for much of West Berkshire, parts of the Thames valley and the areas closest to Reading look more towards Reading as a principal town. In public transport terms, whilst there is a strong axis along the Kennet valley and some links to the north and south, and up the Lambourn valley, the principal means of accessing Newbury from the Thames valley portion of the authority is through Reading.

The population of West Berkshire was 153,000 at the time of the 2011 Census. Fifty-seven thousand people or 37.5% of the population at that point were aged 20 or below, 75,000 (49%) were aged between 21 and 64, and 21,000 (13.5%) 65 or older.

There is a wide variation between wards. More than 48% of the population of Chieveley is aged 20 or under whilst less than 26% of Victoria's population falls into this category. People aged over 64 are best represented in Westwood and least in Thatcham North. Victoria has the highest proportion of people between 21 and 64 and Chieveley the lowest. A full population breakdown by ward is included in Appendix B.

The ethnic profile of the authority was 90% white British, 4% white other, 2.5% Asian, 1.5% mixed background, 1% black and a very small number of people from other backgrounds. Some wards were more diverse than the overall figure suggests, notably Victoria where 79% of the population is white British with 9% of both Asian and other white people. Again, a full ethnic breakdown by ward is included in Appendix B.

Transport, health and education

The 2011 Census provides other useful information. In West Berkshire 12% of households have no access to a vehicle. This is, as to be expected in an area with a large rural population, is less than the average for south east England of 19% or for England as a whole of 26%. Conversely 46% of people in West Berkshire travel not more than 5km to work including those who work at home, slightly lower than the south eastern average of 48%.

87% of residents feel that they are in good or very good health, slightly higher than the south east average of 84%, whilst the figure of 9% of residents providing unpaid care is consistent with the south eastern average of 10%. West Berkshire's educational attainment profile is slightly more weighted to the extremes than the south eastern average, with above average rates both for people with no qualifications and those educated to degree level.

Deprivation

Deprivation is calculated through a number of indices which produce a score for each area. These scores are ranked and the degree of deprivation is usually expressed by a percentage which indicates how the area performs in the national rankings, so that a score of 90% would indicate that the area is in the least deprived tenth for that index. Each index is calculated for groupings called super output areas; these are typically smaller than wards. It does not follow that if one super output area has a score of 75% and another of 25% that the two areas combined would have a score of 50%. Nevertheless, this methodology has been followed here as the alternative would be a large piece of work beyond the scope of this report. The scores for deprivation indices must therefore be regarded as an indication rather than an exact figure.

West Berkshire is not a deprived area in general, and for a composite range of indicators it is the 36th least deprived local authority in England and Wales out of a total of 326. An analysis by ward (again see Appendix B for a full breakdown) indicates the relative wealth of West Berkshire – only Victoria ward shows an indicative score below the national average. However, within individual wards there are some pockets of low incomes, with certain areas of Greenham, Thatcham North, Calcot, Speen and Victoria being in the lowest third for England.

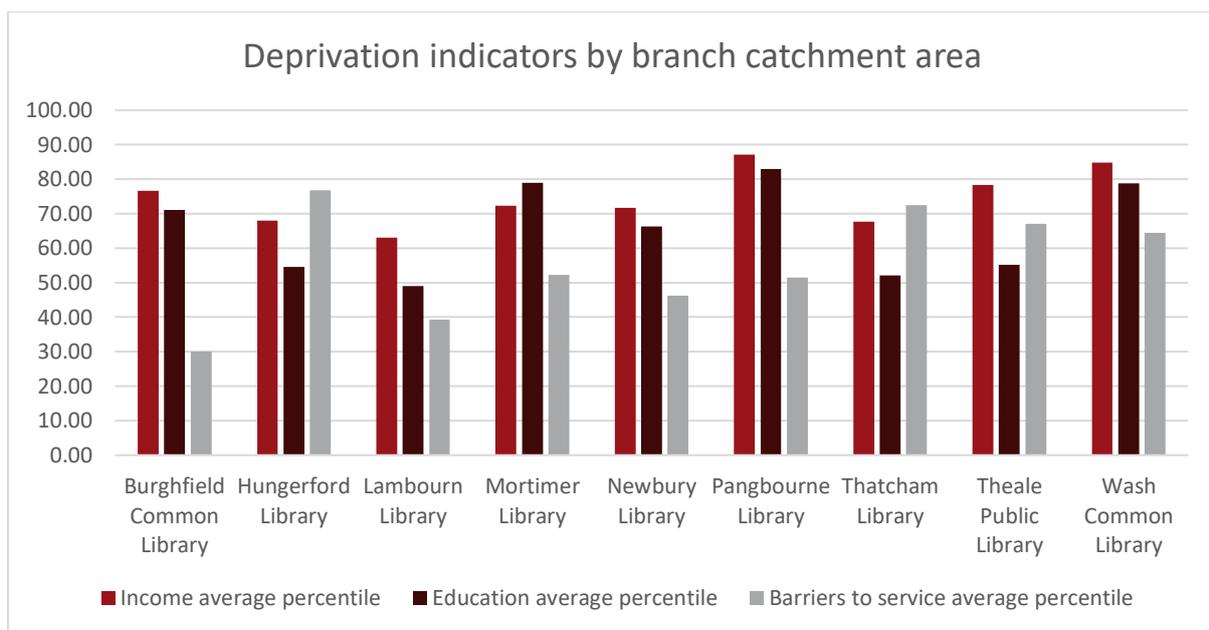
The relative educational attainment across the authority is lower than that of income, with a part of Greenham ward being in the lowest 20th of all super outputs areas, and 14 SOAs out

of 98 in West Berkshire being in the lowest third. Barriers to services and housing is an area where West Berkshire scored relatively badly, with one portion of Downlands being in the lowest 2% and 31 SOAs in the lowest third.

In the detailed analyses of individual libraries in section 6 we discuss the implications of these variations in levels of need for service provision in those communities.

Deprivation indicators by branch catchment area

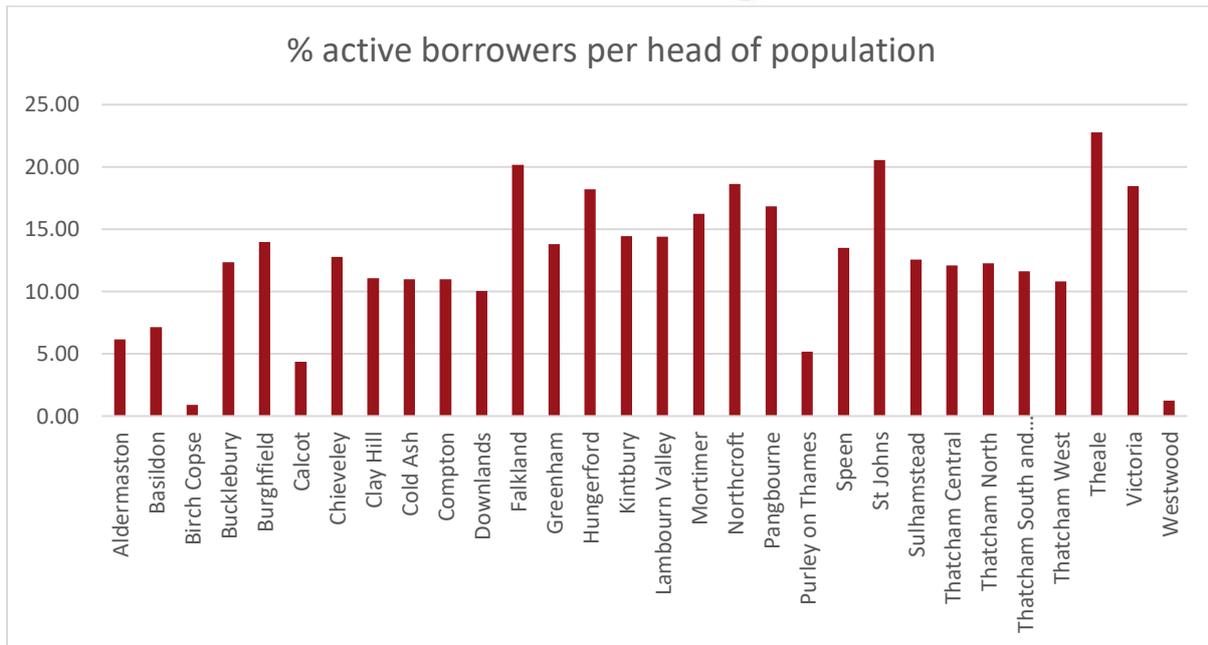
The chart below shows some indicators of deprivation, where the lower the percentage the higher is the deprivation. In a rural area, a high degree of barriers to services is to be expected and this is particularly true in the catchment areas⁸ of Burghfield Common and Lambourn libraries. Downlands ward included in the Newbury catchment area is in the lowest 4% for England and Wales, although no other ward is in the lowest fifth.



4.4 Use of libraries

There are wide variations in the use of libraries by residents across West Berkshire. The chart below shows the percentage of residents from each ward who are active borrowers from West Berkshire library service – defined as being anyone who has borrowed an item in the last 12 months. There are some caveats that should be borne in mind – active borrowers do not equate to library users as some people will use libraries without borrowing, for example to use computers or to study. Secondly, not all library users are West Berkshire residents; the Council has a statutory duty to provide libraries to anyone who lives, works or studies in the area. 9% of active borrowers live outside the authority with particular concentrations at Hungerford (close to the Wiltshire boundary), Newbury and Thatcham (both employment and educational hubs).

⁸ Nominal catchment areas have been allocated to each branch. The methodology for this is set out in Appendix A



There are some very obvious anomalies amongst the library usage within wards. Birch Copse and Westwood have hardly any active borrowers, and Calcot and Purley on Thames have far fewer than average. This is probably because residents in these areas look towards Reading for their services and without a local library do not see the need to travel to a West Berkshire location.

Elsewhere the highest percentage use of a library is within Theale⁹, St Johns, Falkland, Victoria, Northcroft and Hungerford wards, all areas containing or close to a library. Theale library incorporates both a library open to the public at large and also a library provided for Theale School. The latter accounts for up to half of the visits to the library. However, the correlation between the percentage of active borrowers and whether or not there is a library in the ward is not particularly strong at 0.6¹⁰. Similarly, there is a weak correlation (0.27) between population density of a ward and library usage, indicating that distance from a library is only one factor in discouraging use, and this rises only slightly to 0.3 when users of the At Home service or mobile libraries are excluded from the calculation¹¹.

Profile of users

Although West Berkshire as a whole is approximately equally divided between men and women, the active borrowers of the library service are predominantly female. This is particularly true at Lambourn and Pangbourne.

In all libraries, and especially Theale and Wash Common, a higher proportion of 0-20 year olds are using the library than in the catchment areas. The converse is true for those aged 21-64 although the difference is least marked at Newbury, probably as it is a centre of

⁹ Note that Theale is a dual-use school and public library, and its usage figures are not directly comparable with other branches

¹⁰ Where 1 is a perfect correlation, 0 is no correlation and -1 is an inverse correlation

¹¹ All the correlation figures given exclude those wards mentioned above where it is assumed that residents are using Reading libraries.

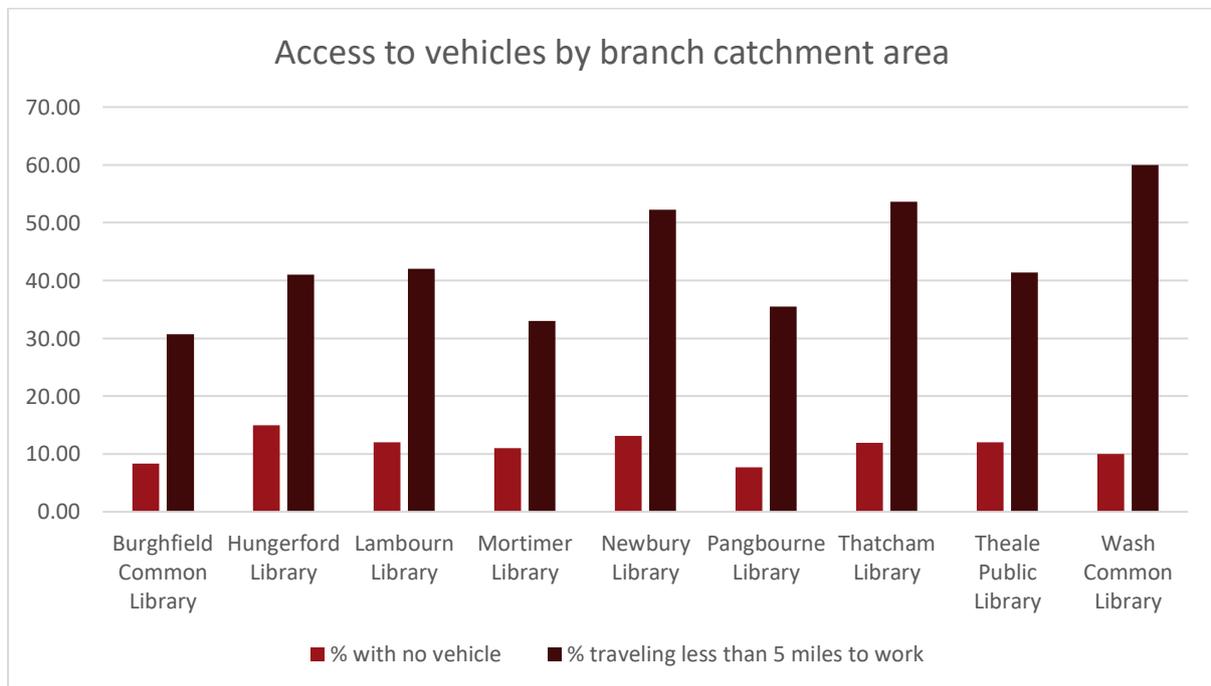
employment. Generally speaking, the proportion of over 64s is well matched to the population served, although this is less the case at Theale and Newbury.

Overall more than 90% of the population of West Berkshire is white British with about 4.5% white other and around 5% in all other groups. The membership of the library service is more diverse than this with 81% white British and 12% white other. Relatively high levels of people classified as white other use Newbury and Hungerford libraries, and the mobile service. About 6% of active borrowers at Newbury are Asian.

Getting to the library

In West Berkshire the proportion of household with no access to a vehicle is low, as one would expect in a rural area. However, there are some variations between catchment areas, with Hungerford having the least access to a vehicle and Pangbourne the most. Some areas within the Newbury catchment area have very low access to vehicles (30% of households in Victoria ward have none) but the average is brought up by the more rural parts (for example only 4% of households in Downlands have no vehicle).

There is more variation in the patterns of travel to work¹² where only 30% of Burghfield residents work locally but 60% of Wash Common residents travel less than five miles, presumably working in Newbury.



There is further information about the profile of library users in Appendix B and in the detailed analyses of individual libraries in section 6.

¹² Data is taken from the 2001 Census and is the most up to date available

4.5 What people told us

While public consultation did not form part of this assessment, we engaged with a number of stakeholders which included:

- groups of users at drop-in sessions at each library and on a mobile route;
- representatives of Friends groups, Parish and Town councils;
- staff; and
- partners and potential partners;

We also offered an email address for residents to contact us about their use of the libraries if they were unable to attend a drop-in session.

4.5.1 Users

Many users contacted us, either at the drop in sessions or via email, to tell us how much they valued the library service. Points made about specific libraries are included in the summary library by library analyses in section 6 and more detailed information in Appendix E; here we make some general points about their feedback. Note that where user feedback is reported these do not constitute verbatim reports of what were fairly informal sessions, but we do include all the main points raised.

Drop-in sessions were held in every library and were a minimum of three hours in length. Altogether we estimate that around 500 people attended, with an average of 50 at each library apart from at Wash Common and Burghfield Common where there were 80 to 90. There were consistent messages at all sessions about the value of the library to local people:

- as a hub of the community;
- importance for children's reading and literacy levels;
- important to help with social isolation and settling into community;
- digital – 'not everyone has a computer';
- excellent activities;
- excellent staff;
- importance of being local – usage would decline if needed to travel to Newbury to access library service; and
- importance of intergenerational social interaction

In general people would be happy to pay for things to keep their library open, and the following were suggested:

- reserve and collect 50p/book (citing heavy levels of use and that 'everywhere else charges');
- £1 or £2 for events e.g. Rhymetime; and

- book groups would pay more

People also expressed a willingness to pay an extra £10 per month on their council tax, or a membership fee of, say, £50 per year, but the latter is not permitted under the legislation of the Public Library and Museums Act.

The public were generally supportive of a greater use of volunteers, but valued the staff's knowledge and would not want to see the service totally run by volunteers.

A number of people suggested keeping community libraries open and closing Newbury. It was felt that in rural areas, they could have access to more council services through the libraries.

A member of our team also spent a day on the mobile library, meeting users at five stops. Comments echoed the general value put on the service by the public with several saying that they regarded the service as a lifeline. A majority of the users seen that day would be unable to use a static library, or would find it very difficult to do so, as they live in sheltered housing and lack mobility or, in the case of the stop at a prison secure hospital, would not be permitted to leave the premises.

4.5.2 Staff

We held focus groups with five representative groups of staff:

- librarians;
- library supervisors;
- frontline staff;
- mobile staff; and
- a group of managers

Below we summarise the key points arising from these sessions:

1. There is a general anxiety amongst the staff, caused by the time taken by the council to decide on the future of the library service.
2. They feel that no thought was put into the original proposals and that councillors do not understand or care about the service. They think the council has not consulted widely enough; people think libraries are already closed.
3. There was also a concern that the council was not giving information to friends' groups and that this made things difficult for frontline staff.
4. There was a recurring theme about the value of libraries as a community resource that they didn't feel was understood. They feel that libraries are vital in combatting social isolation and bringing communities together. They feel that the usage of libraries is also changing and that 'It's not just old ladies with trollies anymore'.

5. When asked what they thought the most important aspects of the service were, they said:
 - Libraries are accessible spaces and everyone is welcome;
 - They are a tried and trusted source of good quality information;
 - Help with technology and getting online, particularly for jobseekers, is a growing area;
 - They provide books: appropriate stock, including online resources;
 - Outreach, encouraging and improving literacy;
 - The social contact improves wellbeing and combats loneliness;
 - If you withdraw library services, you are withdrawing access to broadband for many people; and
 - There are pockets of poverty in West Berks, libraries never turn anybody away.

6. All levels of staff had plenty of comments and suggestions relating to the way the service was run and improvements/savings that could be made:
 - There is a difficult relationship between Newbury Library and the branches, and not enough movement of staff to counteract this;
 - There is a perception that burdens are not shared fairly; some staff are overworked whereas others have less to do;
 - Librarians do not visit or interact with branches, they were perceived to be focused on Newbury;
 - There is not enough challenging of tradition, things are done because ‘that’s the way we’ve always done them’;
 - There is an issue with staff working short hours that do not suit the service and a need to move to either half or full time hours;
 - The service is not attracting young people to work in libraries;
 - There is unnecessary expenditure; contracts and contractors should be challenged;
 - They like idea of coffee shops and the bookshop model; the service could capitalise on attracting groups that meet in cafés and coffee shops. There was a feeling that there was not enough proactivity in making things like this happen;
 - Theale Library was a particular concern; there was a frustration with the relationship between the library and the school and it was felt that this impeded any development of the library;
 - There was a feeling that some libraries could operate from cheaper buildings and Theale was cited as an example;
 - Some staff management is poor; responsibility has been given to people who can’t necessarily manage;

- The service could exploit connections with other community organisations;
- There is a strong feeling that volunteers would not be forthcoming in all libraries and an acknowledgement that volunteer programmes need proper management and resource;
- Conversely, others felt that there could be more use made of volunteers;
- Self-service was looked on positively (perhaps a little warily) if it was used properly and the idea of Open+ or similar technology¹³ was attractive if it meant longer opening hours;
- The supplier selection lists for stock should be monitored more regularly to ensure that the right stock was getting to branches; there was a concern about multiple copies being wasteful;
- There is a general feeling that there could be efficiencies at Newbury to save money; for instance, it was widely believed that the number of staffed desks was excessive;
- Staff should work more flexibly and respond to ebbs and flows;
- More money could be made out of the premises;
- There was a strong feeling that management are not visible enough or connected to the whole service and therefore have little understanding of life on the shop floor; staff were unhappy with levels of communication;
- The opening hours should be changed to suit customers rather than staff;
- There could be money saved by sharing and working with other council departments;
- The service could charge for some activities and the public would accept that; and
- Libraries could be the face of the council in rural areas;

4.5.3 Partners and potential partners

We engaged with representatives of the following internal services:

- Adult Community and Family Learning;
- Adult and Children's Services;
- Leisure;
- Heritage and Culture;
- Customer Services;
- Support Services; and
- Public Health

¹³ Open+ and similar technologies enable authorities to open libraries, at least for part of the day, without staff. Customers are able to access library buildings (or specific areas of the library) using smartcards. Borrowing and return of books can be done using self-service machines; computers and space can be used for study and community groups can have meetings without the need for library staff to be present.

Adult Community Learning currently commission the library service to deliver outreach courses particularly IT. Public Health are already working proactively with the library service on a number of initiatives. These include:

- Library Fest;
- Books on Prescription;
- Reminiscence boxes;
- IT support for the homeless; and
- various health promotions

It will be important in the consideration of any future model for the service to ensure central coordination for the continuation of this work.

Apart from that mentioned above, there appears to have been little joint working between other services and libraries to date. Libraries are used occasionally to disseminate information to the public and as space.

The main opportunities for working with other services identified in our engagement were a) the joint use of space, and b) providing information to the public.

Potential future opportunities identified for working with Public Health include:

- providing private 1:1 and group space to the Emotional Health Academy who are based in communities helping young people;
- providing space for health visitors;
- providing space for courses e.g. Recovering College; and
- particularly interested in dance studio in Theale

Through the Children's Trust a new outreach service is starting up. They currently have eleven outreach staff and are looking for venues to engage with the community, particularly in the west and the east. A general public space is needed with quiet, private rooms for 1:1s. This is needed on a regular weekly basis for half or full days depending on the need in each area. The Children's Delivery Group have already started investigating venues and are looking at churches and community centres. Rates would need to be competitive and only libraries with suitable space would be considered.

A number of areas for services to commission the Library Service were identified during our engagement:

- deliver informal courses e.g. IT, fun learning;
- CICs (Community information centres);
- benefits service; and
- improve digital skills

Building Community Together¹⁴ is a new initiative involving the police, public health and the local authority, to help people in West Berkshire help each other. It aims to make their communities stronger and less reliant on council services, whilst still getting the things they need to thrive. This is part of the overall council strategy, which aims to 'support communities to do more for themselves'.

This initiative presents a good opportunity for the library service to get involved. This project has taken off quickly and effectively and is creating a lot of opportunities for communities. There is a board for this initiative which the library service is not yet represented on but there is an open invitation to the service. Libraries could work in a number of ways with this project initially, e.g. by:

- helping to disseminate information about the initiative; and
- providing a safe place for communities to come together;

The project is actively recruiting local staff to deliver activities in the communities and the library service could help to recruit additional staff. Meanwhile the project could help attract library volunteers from the community. This project is also looking at a community hub and spoke model, which is one of the options for the library service identified and explored below.

¹⁴ <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=31746>

5 Library profiles

In this section we provide an overview of our findings on each library in West Berkshire, including a summary of demographic and financial information and of public feedback. The full datasets that underpin these summaries are included as Appendix D and it is these that should be used to inform future decision-making.

Burghfield Common Library

Burghfield Common Library is a small branch serving a predominantly rural area in the south east of West Berkshire and close to Reading. It is open for 19 hours a week, which is lower than the majority of branches.

Use of the library

Burghfield Common is the home branch for around 5% of the active borrowers within the library service. The number of visits to the library are in line with the level of active borrowers but the number of issues is rather higher at over 6%. Computer usage is very low at the branch. Issues are declining rapidly.

The majority of active borrowers are local to the library, with over 77% of active borrowers living within Burghfield ward, and almost all are resident in West Berkshire. Over 60% of active borrowers do not use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is amongst the lowest (direct net cost £32,850) and the cost per visit is below the service average. Staff cost per issue is low suggesting higher levels of productivity. However, income is poor compared to the level of visits.

Demographic information

Like all libraries in West Berkshire, Burghfield Common serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large, but the proportion of working age and older people is lower than the library service average. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves.

By most indicators, the catchment area is amongst the least deprived in West Berkshire, an area with relatively low levels of deprivation. However, there are significant barriers to services. Most working residents travel more than 5 miles to work and only 8% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

Burghfield Common is spread out and has no real centre; therefore there is no obvious good location for a library. The library is on a senior school site but is not a joint school library, and people felt that this could possibly be investigated. There is an unused room between the public library and the school library and better use could be made of this space. Residents felt they were closer to Reading if this library closed than to another West Berkshire Library. It is particularly difficult to walk to Mortimer even though it is close by as there are no pavements and it is an unlit, national speed limit road.

There is a supply of willing volunteers here through the volunteer bureau. Additionally, there is the possibility of moving the community café, which is currently run in the Methodist hall, but this would require installation of public toilets in the library. This does show evidence of a culture of volunteering in the area.

The community feel marginalised by the council; the bus service has already been taken away. It is a very strong community but with no organised group apart from that formed around the existing community café.

In discussing the hub and spoke model, the public proposed Theale as a hub and Mortimer and Burghfield Common as supported community libraries.

Hungerford Library

Hungerford Library is a medium sized branch serving the town of Hungerford and a rural area in the west of West Berkshire. It is open for 26 hours a week although only on 4 days.

Use of the library

Hungerford is the home branch for over 7% of the active borrowers within the library service. The number of visits to the library higher than the level of active borrowers but the number of issues is slightly lower. Computer usage compares well with most branches except Newbury. Issues are declining although at less than the average for the authority.

The majority of active borrowers are local to the library, although almost one in five active borrowers live outside West Berkshire, presumably due to the proximity with the Wiltshire border. Almost 70% of resident active borrowers live within Hungerford ward, with 18% in Kintbury and 7% in Lambourn Valley. Over 64% of active borrowers do not use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is in line with other medium sized libraries (direct net cost £51,100) and the cost per visit is low. Expenditure on staff is higher than at all but two libraries but this is offset by high levels of income and visits.

Demographic information

Like all libraries in West Berkshire, Hungerford serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large, but the proportion of older people is lower than the library service average. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves although people from white other groups are well represented.

The catchment area is amongst the most deprived in West Berkshire, and a low score on barriers to services is anomalous. Most working residents travel more than 5 miles to work but 15% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

There is a very supportive friends' group operating at Hungerford Library. A specific resource is the 1:1 private room available for renting, currently used by registrars, who don't pay, and the town council, who do. The town council have an office in the same building and feel they will need more space in the future. They are willing to support

financially and could take over the running of the building. The library is a good community space and has a garden.

There is support for volunteering but users emphasised that they felt this should be alongside existing staff.

A local group with learning disabilities visit regularly and there is a very active craft group.

Hungerford has been named a Rural Service Centre.

Wiltshire and Oxfordshire residents use the library (Wiltshire charge for reservations 85p). The police are moving into the fire station.

Lambourn Library

Lambourn Library is a small branch serving a predominantly rural area in the north west of West Berkshire. It is open for 15 hours a week, the lowest of any branch.

Use of the library

Lambourn is the home branch for just 3% of the active borrowers within the library service. The number of visits and issues are in line with the level of active borrowers but are the lowest in the service. Computer usage is low at the branch. Issues are declining less rapidly than in the service as a whole.

The majority of active borrowers are local to the library, with over 94% of active borrowers living within Lambourn Valley ward, and the great majority are resident in West Berkshire. Over 78% of active borrowers do not use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is in line with other small branches (direct net cost £34,500) but the cost per visit is high due to poor usage. Staff cost per issue is the highest in the authority suggesting lower levels of productivity. Income is poor compared to the level of visits.

Demographic information

Like all libraries in West Berkshire, Lambourn serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large and this is also true of older people, but the proportion of working age is lower than the library service average. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves.

Income deprivation is the highest for any catchment area of West Berkshire, although it is in the lowest 40% nationally. There are significant barriers to services and a high proportion of residents with no qualifications. Most working residents travel more than 5 miles to work but 12% of households have no access to a vehicle which is high in a largely rural area.

Feedback from users

Lambourn is a quieter library in general with a mixed race community and English conversation groups taking place. There was a general feeling that there is not much going on in the library. Residents said that Oxfordshire are losing their mobile library and therefore more people are coming to use the West Berkshire libraries.

Lambourn residents feel cut off and a lot is being taken away from them. There is no direct bus to Newbury and the cost of parking there is high.

There was less support for volunteering in Lambourn library. The parish council are supportive and committed but would want to see equity across all town and parish councils.

The local police office is closing, and it may be possible to move this into the library building.

Mortimer Library

Mortimer Library is a small branch serving a predominantly rural area in the south east of West Berkshire and close to Reading. It is open for 19 hours a week, which is lower than the majority of branches.

Use of the library

Mortimer is the home branch for around 4% of the active borrowers within the library service. The number of visits to the library are in line with the level of active borrowers but the number of issues is rather higher at almost 5%. Computer usage is very low at the branch. Issues are declining at a rate slightly less than the service as a whole.

The great majority of active borrowers are local to the library, with almost 95% of active borrowers living within Mortimer ward, and nearly all are resident in West Berkshire. Over 70% of active borrowers do not use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is in line with smaller branches (direct net cost £36,700) and the cost per visit is below the service average. Staff cost per issue is high compared to other small branches. However, income is high compared to the level of visits.

Demographic information

Like all libraries in West Berkshire, Mortimer serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large, but the proportion of working age is lower than the library service average. The proportion of older active borrowers are in line with both service and authority figures. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves.

By most indicators, the catchment area is around the average for West Berkshire, an area with relatively low levels of deprivation. Most working residents travel more than 5 miles to work but 11% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

Mortimer is a small library near the church and two primary schools. The parish council office is at the back of the building and rent is paid, but they feel this space is too small and would be put to better use as a café/family room. This space is a conservatory and leads out to the garden.

The library land has a covenant on it from the 1970s stating 'library use only'. More could be made of the library if it were community run. The parish council is very happy to support it financially. They envisage a community hub with central support for books and professional

advice. The police station has closed and is running from a mobile unit in the pub car park, but could be better in the library. The post office is moving and the bank may also be at risk.

Mortimer is a Rural Service Centre. Development of 120 houses is planned in the local area for the near future.

Newbury Library

Newbury Library is the principal library for West Berkshire and is of a different order of scale to all other branches. It is open for 49.5 hours a week over 6 days – over 20% of all hours offered across the service.

Use of the library

Newbury is the home branch for almost half of the active borrowers within the library service. The number of issues at the library is in line with the level of active borrowers but the number of visits is rather lower at 46%. Almost 70% of computer bookings and nearly 95% of Wi-Fi usage across the service are at Newbury. Recently issues have declined less rapidly than across the service, but since 2004/5 they have reduced by half.

Active borrowers using the library are spread out across West Berkshire, with most wards having more than 25% of active borrowers using Newbury library although there are exceptions – wards adjacent to Reading and those containing another library. 88% of active borrowers are resident in West Berkshire, lower than the average probably due to the employment offered in Newbury. Only half of active borrowers do not use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is the highest in the authority as might be expected from a central library (direct net cost £452,859) but the vastly higher staffing costs (almost 50% of all branch staff costs) make the cost per visit the highest in the service. This runs counter to expectations of a central library. However, income is average compared to the level of visits but does little to offset the cost of staff.

Demographic information

The proportion of working age people who are active borrowers is higher at Newbury than the service average but older people are less well represented, probably due to people who work in Newbury making use of the library.

Newbury has a large and diverse catchment area and deprivation levels are around the average for the authority, but there is a great variation within this. Downlands has a barriers to services indicator within the bottom 4% nationally.

Feedback from users

Response at Newbury to the drop-in was low but this may be because the library is not viewed as under threat. From observation, the staff levels are high and better use could be made of self-service facilities. The library is a busy, excellent space. Regular events take place and space is hired out. Space could be found for a café.

Pangbourne Library

Pangbourne Library is a small branch serving a portion of the Thames valley in the north east of West Berkshire and close to Reading. It is open for 22 hours a week, rather higher than the other small branches.

Use of the library

Pangbourne is the home branch for around 5.7% of the active borrowers within the library service, again higher than other small branches. Visits and issues are in line with the level of active borrowers. Computer usage is low at the branch, although again not as low as the other small branches. Pangbourne has Wi-Fi but it is hardly used. Issues are declining less rapidly than the service as a whole.

Pangbourne has a catchment area rather greater than the other small branches, but 88% of active borrowers live within Pangbourne, Purley on Thames or Basildon wards. A relatively high proportion (12%) of active borrowers are not resident in West Berkshire, probably due to the proximity of the authority boundary. Over 60% of active borrowers do not use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is in line with smaller branches (direct net cost £35,750) and the cost per visit is well below the service average. Staff cost per issue is average compared to other branches if Newbury is excluded. Income is rather low compared to the level of visits.

Demographic information

Like all libraries in West Berkshire, Pangbourne serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large, but the difference between age groups is not so pronounced at Pangbourne and the proportion of working age is higher than the library service average. The proportion of older active borrowers are in line with both service and authority figures. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves, although white other borrowers are less well represented.

The catchment area of Pangbourne has low levels of educational and income deprivation, although health and barriers to services are around the average for the authority. The proportion of working residents travelling more than 5 miles to work is the highest in West Berkshire and only 7% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

Pangbourne is a small town library just along from the central shops in one room. It has a very well organised friends' group who are ready to form charitable status and take over the running of the library. At the AGM of the parish council, they voted for the library to be their number one priority financially.

Pangbourne is a Rural Service Centre. The Children's Centre has closed therefore there may be colocation potential. The community feel they could make better use of the space for example in the evenings. A Sulham parish councillor said 'What do we get from our council tax, closing the library is a step too far'.

Thatcham Library

Thatcham Library is a medium sized branch serving the town of Thatcham and a portion of the Kennet valley. It is by most metrics the best-used library after Newbury. It is open for 35 hours a week, offering the second highest number of hours of any West Berkshire library.

Use of the library

Thatcham is the home branch for one in eight of the active borrowers within the library service. Visits and issues are in line with the level of active borrowers. Computer usage is high at the branch, and the number of bookings per visit is the second highest in the authority. Issues are declining less rapidly than the service as a whole.

Thatcham's catchment area is limited to the four wards that make up the town, and 78% of active borrowers live within that area with another 10% from Bucklebury and Cold Ash. Almost no active borrowers are resident outside West Berkshire but almost half also use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is considerably higher than the smaller branches (direct net cost £58,100, almost twice that of Burghfield for example), although only 13% of the cost of Newbury. However, the cost per visit is the best in the service, and this is the same for the cost per issue and cost per active borrower. Staff cost per issue is low implying high productivity, but income is low compared to the level of visits.

Demographic information

Like all libraries in West Berkshire, Thatcham serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large, and the proportion of working age is considerably lower than the library service average. The proportion of older active borrowers are in line with the catchment area. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves, although white other borrowers are less well represented.

The catchment area of Thatcham has relatively high levels of health, educational and income deprivation, although barriers to services are low for the authority. The proportion of working residents travelling more than 5 miles to work is the second lowest in West Berkshire and almost 12% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

Thatcham Library is not in the centre of town, but near the dentist, doctors and a parade of shops; however, it is still difficult to find and has poor signage. Thatcham's population is as big as Newbury and growing. There is free parking for one hour in Thatcham near the library. Residents are supportive of the use of volunteers but only alongside permanent staff. The library is surrounded by sheltered housing. There is support from the town council to contribute to running costs.

Theale Library

Theale Library is a medium sized branch (a joint school/public library) serving the village of Theale and a portion of the Kennet valley close to Reading. It is open for 26 hours a week.

Use of the library

Theale is the home branch for 8.7% of the active borrowers within the library service, making it third in terms of membership. Visits are in line with the level of active borrowers, although issues are lower. Whilst it is not possible entirely to disaggregate usage between the general public and school pupils, it is likely that up to a quarter of issues and half of the visits are accounted for by the school. Computer usage is high at the branch, and the number of bookings per visit is the third highest in the authority. Issues are declining at the lowest rate of the service as a whole. A high proportion of visits are associated with events.

Theale's catchment area includes Birch Copse, Calcot and Westwood wards, all of which are effectively outlying portions of the Reading metropolitan area, as well as Theale ward. Library usage in Birch Copse and Westwood is very low indeed. However, Theale does attract significant use from other areas outside its catchment area as it has been defined for the purposes of this exercise, and whilst around 40% of active borrowers come from Theale ward, a similar number come from Bucklebury, Calcot and Sulhampstead. 88% of active borrowers are resident within West Berkshire but more than half also use another library. It is worth noting that 98% of library users living in Theale ward have Theale library as their home branch.

Costs

The cost of the library is the lowest of the medium sized branches (direct net cost £51,400). Cost per visit is second only to Thatcham, and the same is true for cost per active borrower and cost per computer booking. Staff cost per issue is around the service average if Newbury library is excluded; however, income per issue is of a different order compared to other branches being almost four times the service average. Again, these figures are likely to be somewhat distorted by the school library, not least because a significant proportion of transactions take place during hours when the library is unstaffed.

Demographic information

Theale serves a far greater proportion of younger people than the population at large and is well above the service average for this age group, but the proportion of working age and older people is considerably lower than the catchment or library service averages. This is due to the high use of the library by school pupils. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves, although white other borrowers are less well represented.

The catchment area of Theale has relatively high levels of health and educational deprivation, although income and barriers to services are low for the authority. The proportion of working residents travelling more than 5 miles to work around the average in West Berkshire and almost 12% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

Theale Library is a joint school/public library situated at the entrance of the senior school. Attached is an extension of considerable size (2 classrooms, a dance studio and a kitchen and toilets). This is currently managed by the school and full rental potential is not being realised.

The parish council are supportive, including potentially contributing to funding. There is a supportive friend's group, which includes some members from the parish council.

The community would like a café and there is space for this. There is a trust who run the village hall and there may be opportunities for working together.

There is no bank in the village therefore possible partnerships with bank for rural community may be an idea across all libraries.

Currently there is a disproportionately high cost of running this library.

Many more activities could be run in the library, especially if more community run with more involvement. They could rent rooms for children's parties and other events. Support locally for more volunteers. The council service centre in Calcot closed, therefore people could access more council services through the library. The parish council would also be interested in renting space; they do not have a lot of money but perhaps surrounding parishes could contribute.

Wash Common Library

Wash Common Library is a small branch serving the southwestern portion of Newbury. It is open for 15 hours a week.

Use of the library

Wash Common is the home branch for less than 3% of the active borrowers within the library service, making it lowest in terms of membership. Visits and issues are rather higher than the level of active borrowers, although neither amount to more than 4% of the total for the service and only Lambourn has lower usage. Computer usage is very low indeed and is the lowest per visit within the service. Issues are declining at the greatest rate of any branch library.

There is no ward in West Berkshire where the greatest number of active borrowers have Wash Common as a home branch, but 30% of active borrowers in Falkland have given the library as a home branch and for this reason, comparative figures have been used for that ward. 76% of active borrowers giving Wash Common as a home branch live in Falkland ward with a further 15% in Kintbury and St Johns. Since Wash Common opened in 2004, it is possible that some long-standing members who now use Wash Common registered at another branch. 88% of active borrowers are resident within West Berkshire but almost 60% also use another library.

Costs

The cost of the library is in line with other small branches (direct net cost £36,550). Cost per visit is third highest in the authority, or second if Newbury is excluded. The same is true for cost per issue whilst active borrower and cost per computer booking is the highest in the authority. Staff cost per issue is high, only being exceeded by Lambourn and income per issue is the lowest in the service.

Demographic information

Wash Common serves a greater proportion of younger people than the population at large but the proportion of working age people is considerably lower than the catchment or library service averages. A high proportion of older people use the library. The ethnic profile of active borrowers is roughly similar to that of the area that it serves and white other borrowers are well represented.

The catchment area of Wash Common has relatively low levels of income, health and educational deprivation, although barriers to services are average for the authority. The proportion of working residents travelling more than 5 miles to work is very high at 60% although only 10% of households have no access to a vehicle.

Feedback from users

Wash Common Library is in the middle of a housing estate three miles outside Newbury. There is a pre-school next door during the week.

The greatest emphasis placed by users was on the importance of local, being able to walk there especially with children and for the elderly. The library has a small, free car park and some visitors drive to the library. The high cost of parking or taking the bus to Newbury, as well as the time taken, is an off-putting factor (especially for the elderly). Smaller community libraries are thought to be better for children. Its proximity to five local schools is considered important.

The local councillor was supportive of using more volunteers. There is a lot of supported housing close by, and a proposed new development nearby¹⁵.

If closing Wash Common, you should consider using the mobile library or At Home service for residents of the sheltered housing.

Mobile Libraries

West Berkshire provides two mobile libraries which serve a number of locations in the authority. Most of these are rural locations distant from a static library, but Birch Copse and Westwood wards are also served. Rather oddly, there are also a number of mobile library stops close to West Berkshire libraries, especially in the Newbury/Speen area.

Use of the library

There are 765 active borrowers using the mobile service, around 3.7% of the total users of the service. Of these about two thirds do not use any of the static branches.

Visits to mobile libraries account for around 3.5% of the total for the service but for over 9% of issues. No computers are provided on the mobiles.

The wards in which mobiles are best used as a proportion of total library usage are Westwood, Aldermaston, Birch Copse, Downlands and Kintbury. Kintbury accounts for over

¹⁵ Although mentioned by several users, it is our understanding that this development will not take place for at least ten years

11% of usage of the mobile service, Calcot nearly 9% and Speen 7%. No other ward has more than 50 active borrowers using the mobile service.

Costs

The cost of the mobiles is higher than any branch other than Newbury (direct net cost for two mobiles £147,050) and this impacts on cost per visit which is four times the average for the authority. The high number of issues brings this figure down somewhat for cost per issue but it is still much higher than any other service point. The cost of providing this service is £192 per active borrower.

Demographic information

Usage of the mobile libraries is predominantly by older people, almost 70% of active borrowers being over 65. A much higher proportion of white other people use the mobiles than either in the authority or across the entire service. This is at odds with most static libraries suggesting that this ethnic group prefer to use mobile libraries. 75% of mobile users are female, higher than the service average of 65%.

Feedback from users

A member of our team spent one day on the mobile and talked to users at the five stops it made. These included two sheltered housing sites, one mobile home site, a prison secure hospital and a housing estate near a school. The comments made by those users echoed the general value put on the service by the public with several saying that they regarded the service as a lifeline. A majority of the users seen that day would be unable to use a static library, or would find it very difficult to do so, but one borrower at the mobile home site also uses the local static library. Most people use the mobile library to borrow books, and users expressed satisfaction with the collections and the regular refresh of stock.

Some users visited the drop-in sessions in static libraries to discuss the mobile library service. They stressed its importance for elderly people living in the villages. They felt it was under-publicised as a service and felt that parish councils could promote it more, and that use could be made of local newsletters. The point was made that they don't need two paid members of staff on the mobile library, and the alternative of book drops was mentioned. There were concerns that reducing to a single vehicle would mean less frequent visits

At Home Service

The At Home Service accounts for only a tiny proportion of active borrowers. Of these the great majority are aged over 65 (94%) and 89% are female. A much greater proportion of members are 'white other' in classification of ethnicity.

The service performs well in terms of issues per visit as might be expected.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Our needs assessment work has demonstrated that the current service is highly valued by users and is perceived by them as meeting a range of needs. Libraries are seen as providing a place (sometimes the only place) where local people can meet, access services and come together as a community. The network of libraries as it currently stands is able to meet people's needs and is compliant with the Public Library and Museums Act 1964. However, our work has also shown that West Berkshire Library Service is relatively expensive to run, and we believe that there are some efficiencies to be found which, while not enabling you to meet the full budget reduction requirement, could make a useful contribution towards it.

But even with the introduction of the efficiency measures proposed above it is clear to us that you cannot continue to maintain a network of nine libraries as you have done in the past within the new budget constraints. Our work indicates that to continue to meet community needs you should make every effort to maintain the current network, or if that is not possible, reduce it as little as possible. Your aim must be to have a network of library branches that are accessible to residents and which provide a core library service as well as targeted offers to meet specific needs. You may wish to explore different ways to provide the service, as have been adopted elsewhere in the country, drawing on the goodwill of your communities to support you, which we have observed throughout our engagement.

Should it prove necessary to close any libraries, despite your best efforts, then mitigating action should be taken to meet needs through, for example, a review of mobile library stops (location, frequency, duration).

Appendix A: defining branch catchment areas

There are a number of ways that library catchment areas could be defined. By one measure, all points which are closer to a particular library than any other would form a catchment area. This has two disadvantages – first that it is not possible to obtain census or other data to compare with library usage for catchment areas defined in this way, and secondly it ignores the fact that many people for all sorts of reasons do not use their nearest library preferring one further away.

It is also possible to define a catchment area by selecting those wards adjoining the library or where it is most likely that residents will use a particular library. A third method is to analyse current patterns of membership and allocate wards to the library which has most use by residents of that ward. These two last methods allow comparisons with census data.

The last method reflects the actual rather than the theoretical position. If it is adopted the results are shown below:

Ward	Most used library by ward residents	% of active borrowers in ward using best used library	% of residents using At Home or mobile services
Aldermaston	Newbury	39.66	20.00
Basildon	Pangbourne	66.97	9.95
Birch Copse	Theale	57.14	18.57
Bucklebury	Newbury	49.40	6.97
Burghfield	Burghfield Common	90.85	2.77
Calcot	Theale	75.46	18.02
Chieveley	Newbury	84.59	6.23
Clay Hill	Newbury	90.61	0.13
Cold Ash	Newbury	57.37	4.21
Compton	Newbury	74.71	9.20
Downlands	Newbury	77.96	16.61
Falkland	Newbury	68.10	0.94
Greenham	Newbury	91.59	3.06
Hungerford	Hungerford	85.16	2.00
Kintbury	Newbury	49.93	12.79
Lambourn Valley	Lambourn	70.77	3.48
Mortimer	Mortimer	83.64	2.90
Northcroft	Newbury	93.08	4.01
Pangbourne	Pangbourne	92.22	1.40
Purley on Thames	Pangbourne	73.67	9.76
Speen	Newbury	85.29	9.97
St Johns	Newbury	91.07	3.01
Sulhamstead	Burghfield Common	39.62	8.36
Thatcham Central	Thatcham	71.33	2.61
Thatcham North	Thatcham	72.22	0.42

Thatcham South and Crookham	Thatcham	63.50	4.44
Thatcham West	Thatcham	62.32	0.29
Theale	Theale	97.52	0.93
Victoria	Newbury	91.02	3.91
Westwood	Theale	38.24	38.24

This shows that for the majority of wards, there is normally one library which is the home library for most residents. In wards where a library is located, it is almost always the local library that is most popular although Wash Common library is less well used than Newbury library in Falkland ward and almost no people are using Wash Common from the neighbouring Greenham ward. Sulhampstead is almost equally divided between users of Burghfield Common and Theale libraries, but otherwise the most well used library for a ward is considerably better used than the next most well used. An equal number of Westwood residents use Theale library and the various mobile and At Home services, but the actual number of active borrowers in this ward is very low (34 in total).

With the exception of Westwood, no more than 20% of residents use the mobile and At Home services in any ward, with the highest being in Aldermaston, Birch Copse, Calcot, Downlands and Kintbury.

Using this methodology, it is possible to compare the performance of individual branches to the wards for which the branch is the best used library. To overcome the problem that no ward has been allocated to Wash Common, that branch has been compared to Falkland ward although the ward is also used in the comparative statistics for Newbury library.

Appendix B: detailed demographic report

Population breakdown by ward:

Ward	Population	0-20	21 -64	65+
Aldermaston	2851	31.92	50.86	17.22
Basildon	3103	35.93	49.53	14.53
Birch Copse	7789	35.05	49.84	15.11
Bucklebury	6730	45.47	41.63	12.90
Burghfield	5955	39.90	48.50	11.60
Calcot	8785	37.67	51.88	10.45
Chieveley	2890	48.27	39.97	11.76
Clay Hill	6827	38.52	51.03	10.44
Cold Ash	3458	46.41	40.92	12.67
Compton	3164	40.30	47.76	11.95
Downlands	3115	37.21	49.92	12.87
Falkland	6361	37.70	46.38	15.93
Greenham	5682	41.39	48.59	10.01
Hungerford	5767	32.36	51.45	16.20
Kintbury	5034	35.94	49.84	14.22
Lambourn Valley	5575	33.85	50.10	16.05
Mortimer	5732	39.71	44.30	16.00
Northcroft	5354	33.21	53.57	13.22
Pangbourne	2978	37.54	45.90	16.55
Purley on Thames	6548	33.64	50.41	15.94
St Johns	5799	32.92	50.77	16.31
Speen	5662	34.55	47.90	17.56
Sulhamstead	2953	39.89	46.60	13.51
Thatcham Central	6033	37.39	51.14	11.47
Thatcham North	5870	44.38	46.47	9.15
Thatcham South and Crookham	6974	41.14	49.02	9.84
Thatcham West	6390	36.65	52.39	10.95
Theale	2835	36.68	50.58	12.73
Victoria	4852	25.74	62.82	11.44
Westwood	2756	36.76	44.59	18.65

Ethnic breakdown by ward:

Ward	White British	White other	Mixed	Asian	Black	Other
Aldermaston	94	3	1	1	0	0
Basildon	93	4	2	1	0	0
Birch Copse	89	3	3	3	2	0
Bucklebury	92	5	1	1	0	0
Burghfield	93	3	1	2	1	0
Calcot	83	4	3	6	3	0
Chieveley	92	3	1	3	1	0
Clay Hill	86	7	1	4	1	0
Cold Ash	92	4	1	1	1	0
Compton	95	2	1	1	0	0
Downlands	94	4	1	1	0	0
Falkland	92	4	2	2	2	0
Greenham	90	5	2	3	1	0
Hungerford	94	4	1	1	0	0
Kintbury	94	4	1	1	0	0
Lambourn Valley	93	5	1	1	0	0
Mortimer	90	4	2	3	1	0
Northcroft	88	6	1	3	1	0
Pangbourne	91	5	2	2	1	0
Purley on Thames	88	4	2	3	1	0
St Johns	90	5	1	2	1	1
Speen	92	5	1	1	1	0
Sulhamstead	93	4	1	1	1	0
Thatcham Central	91	5	2	2	1	0
Thatcham North	92	4	1	2	1	0
Thatcham South and Crookham	90	4	2	3	1	0
Thatcham West	93	4	1	1	1	0
Theale	90	4	2	3	1	0
Victoria	79	9	2	9	1	1
Westwood	91	3	2	2	1	0

Deprivation indices by ward:

Ward	Income average percentile	Education average percentile	Barriers to service average percentile
Aldermaston	74.00	64.00	23.00
Basildon	94.00	92.50	21.50

Birch Copse	90.80	64.40	76.00
Bucklebury	86.75	90.75	24.75
Burghfield	81.75	78.25	41.50
Calcot	61.83	48.83	32.83
Chieveley	97.50	89.50	53.00
Clay Hill	55.25	33.50	78.50
Cold Ash	89.00	84.50	46.50
Compton	82.00	69.50	21.50
Downlands	80.00	77.50	3.50
Falkland	84.75	78.75	64.50
Greenham	56.67	38.67	34.67
Hungerford	68.00	54.50	76.75
Kintbury	74.00	73.67	40.33
Lambourn Valley	63.00	49.00	39.25
Mortimer	72.33	79.00	52.33
Northcroft	54.33	50.67	66.00
Pangbourne	84.50	79.50	76.00
Purley on Thames	83.00	77.00	56.75
St Johns	66.75	80.25	84.50
Speen	59.00	56.50	29.00
Sulhamstead	71.50	64.00	18.50
Thatcham Central	62.50	51.75	79.25
Thatcham North	71.00	59.25	76.25
Thatcham South and Crookham	67.67	59.67	66.33
Thatcham West	69.50	38.00	68.25
Theale	64.00	48.50	67.50
Victoria	44.33	40.33	77.67
Westwood	96.50	59.00	92.00

Appendix C: full financial summary

West Berkshire Libraries – value for money appraisal

This appendix provides the full dataset that underpins the summary at 4.2 in the main body of the report. It focuses on comparisons between West Berkshire Library Service (WBLS) and other library authorities that are similar both demographically and in the pressures that they face. This gives an indication of the value for money which WBLS provides.

Within individual library authorities there are often considerable variations between the performance and costs of individual library branches and services, and also these are generally not reported through CIPFA but can be analysed through internal service data. The second part of this appendix therefore focuses on variations within WBLS and gives an indication of how effective spending is within the service.

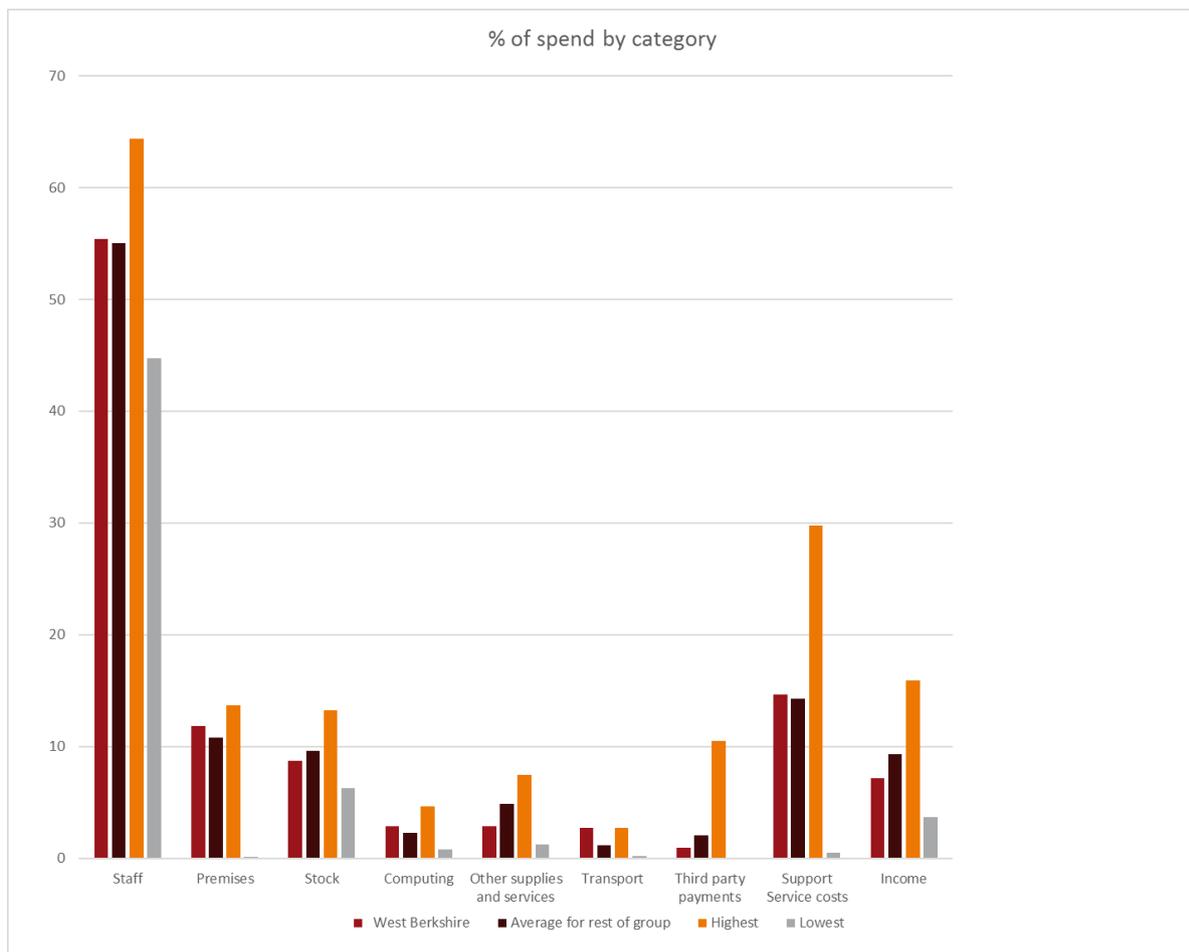
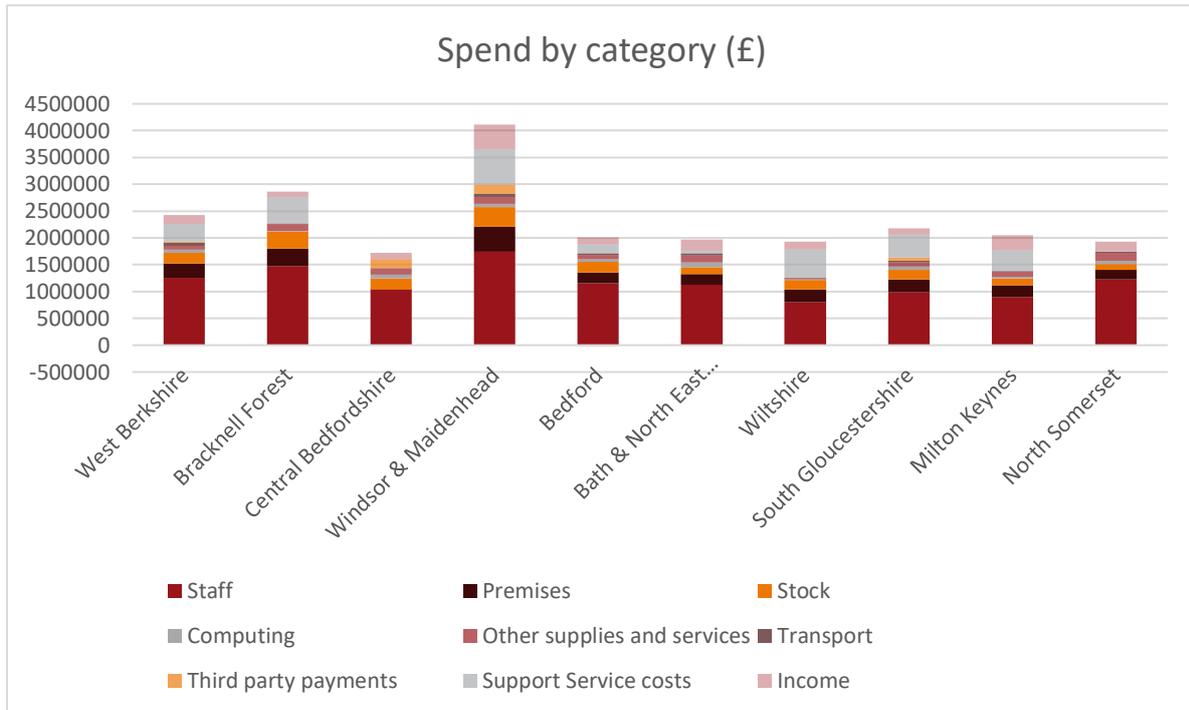
Comparison with other authorities

The data below is taken from the CIPFA Public Library Statistics for 2014/15. These were accompanied by three analytical reports showing comparisons for national, regional and 'nearest neighbour' authorities. Whilst all are useful in building up a picture of the relative performance of any participating library service, they do also present some significant difficulties:

The nearest neighbour analysis compares WBLS to a fifteen similar authorities elsewhere in the country, and in particular with unitary authorities where the majority of the population is centred in one medium sized town surrounded by more rural areas; the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull was also included, as although some areas of the authority are part of the West Midlands conurbation there is a significant rural portion.

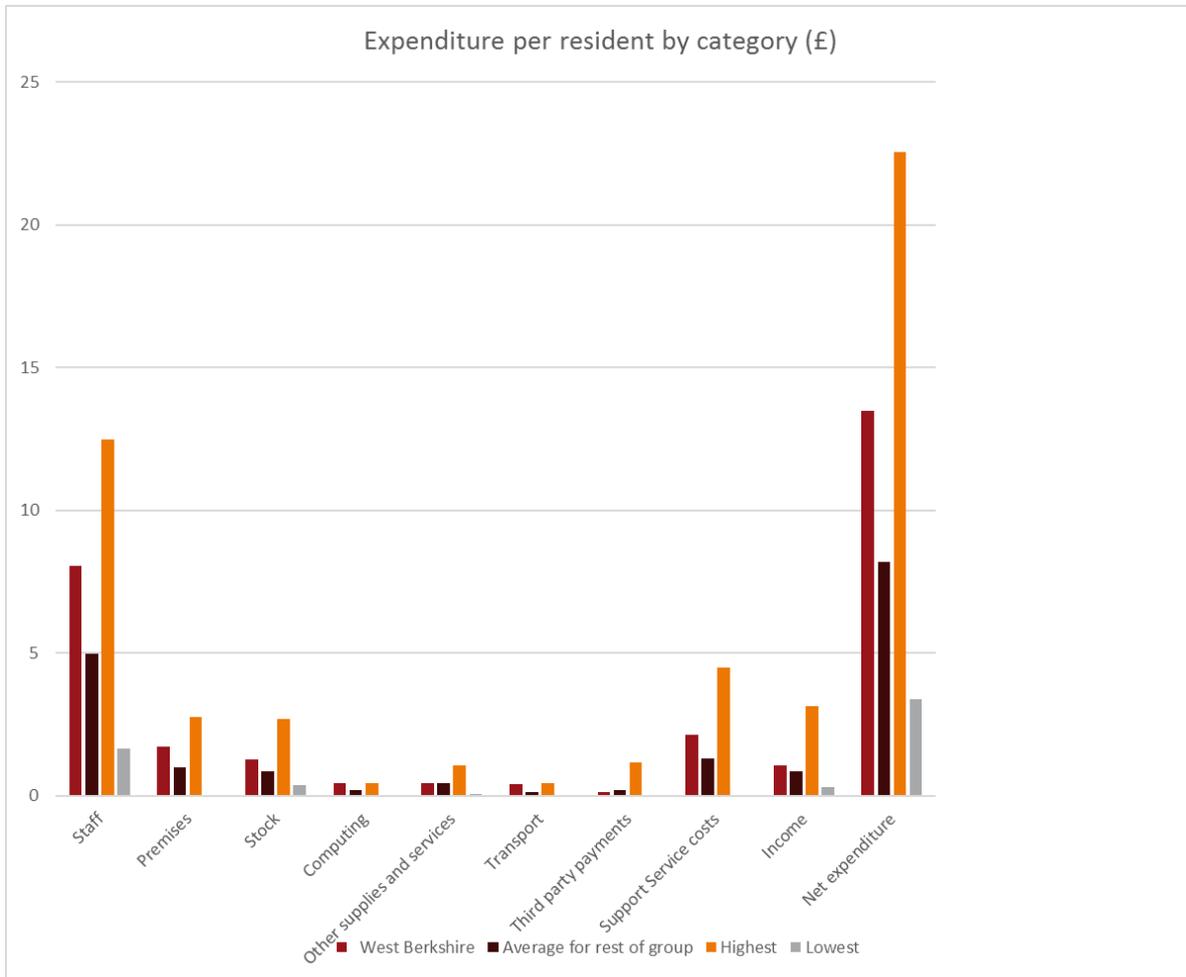
However, when considering value for money, comparator authorities must be in roughly similar market circumstances especially for staff and property costs for an analysis to be meaningful, and the inclusion in the nearest neighbour report of authorities such as Herefordshire, Solihull and the two Cheshire services would skew financial comparisons. Rutland spends more than twice as much per resident on its library service than any other in the comparator group (and nearly four times as much as West Berkshire) and would therefore skew all comparative figure, whilst Wokingham did not provide any data to CIPFA. For this reason, the group of comparator authorities has been narrowed and Bracknell Forest, Central Bedfordshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Bedford, Bath and North East Somerset, Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, Milton Keynes and North Somerset have been retained. Adjoining two tier county authorities – Hampshire and Oxfordshire – have not been included as the scale of the library operations in those areas makes meaningful comparisons difficult.

Patterns of spending



The charts above show how expenditure is allocated across several major headings within comparator authorities, in absolute terms and percentages¹⁶. West Berkshire’s overall expenditure is slightly above the average for the comparator group but the allocation of the budget across the various categories is broadly in line with the other authorities. The proportion of budget spent on transport is the highest in the group, although other supplies and services are lower; income is below average.

Expenditure by population

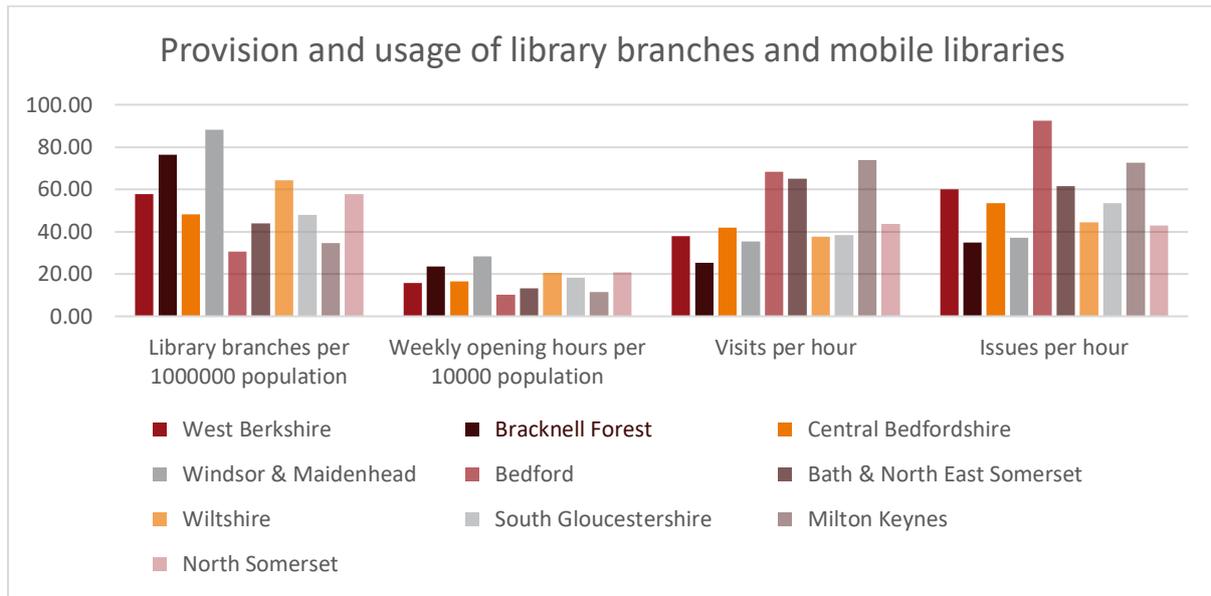


The chart above shows how West Berkshire invests in its library service compared to the average for other authorities in the group and relative to their populations. Whilst nowhere near as high as Bracknell Forest or Windsor and Maidenhead, WBL is spending considerably more per capita than most authorities in the comparator group.

In most spending categories, West Berkshire is investing above the average; this is particularly the case in staffing and premises. Investment in transport, whilst only a very small proportion of the overall investment, is four times the average for the group.

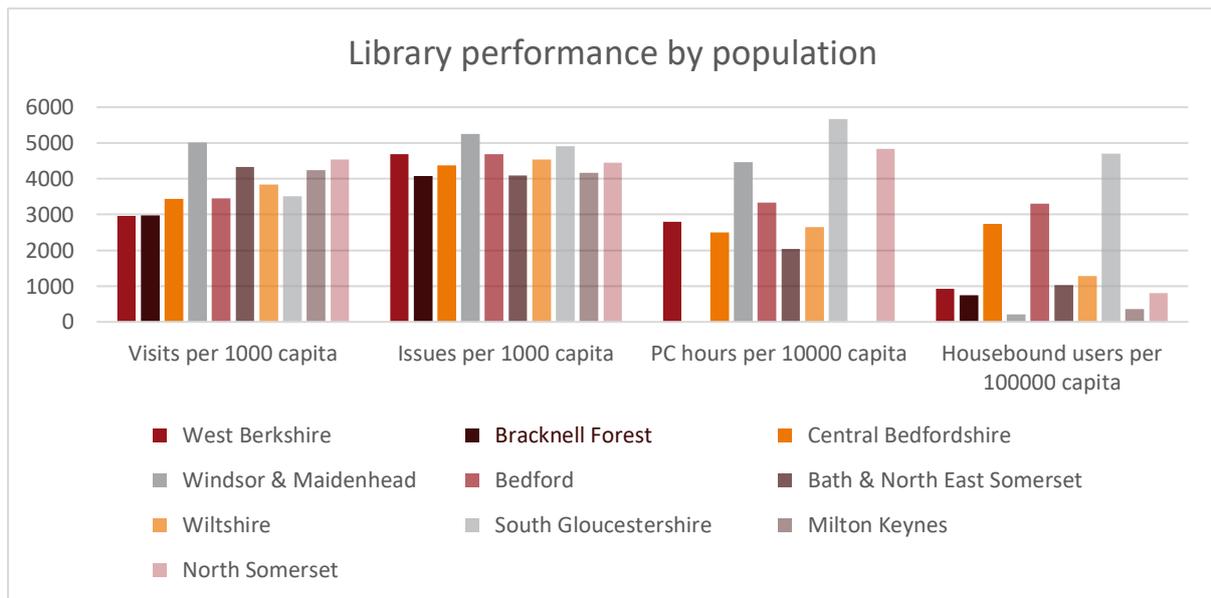
¹⁶ For the sake of clarity, income is shown as a positive rather than a negative figure

Provision of libraries



The chart above shows the relative provision and usage of libraries adjusted for population¹⁷. West Berkshire is providing slightly more libraries per resident than the average for the group, although the opening hours per resident are slightly lower than average. The number of visits per hour offered is low although the issues per hour is above average.

Usage by population



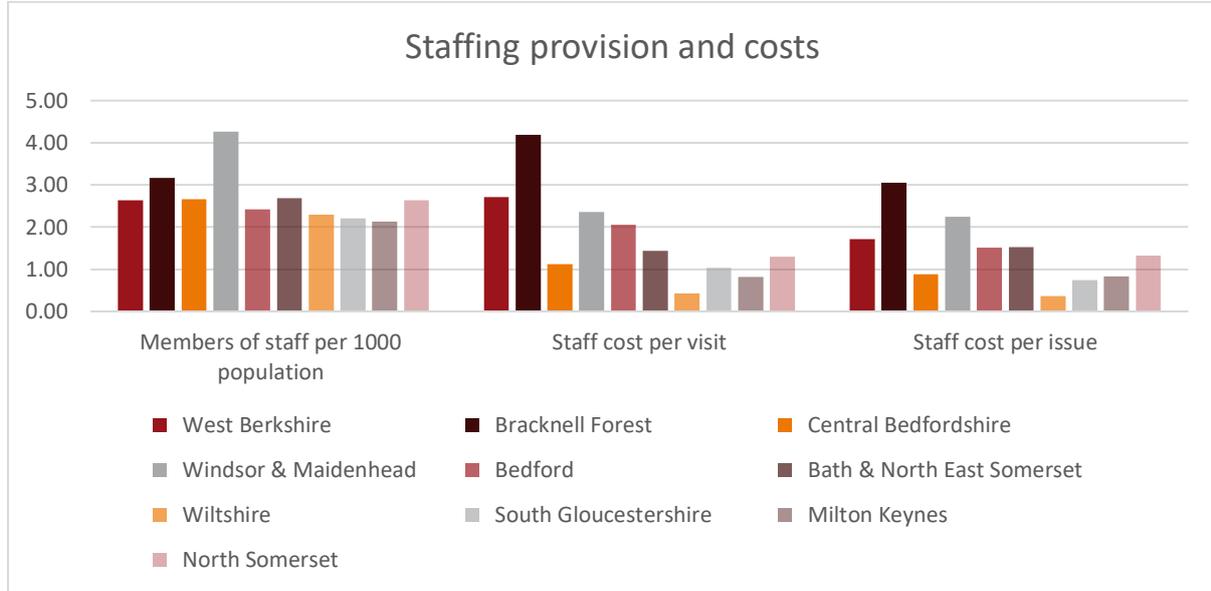
The chart above shows the level of usage of library services in comparison to resident population¹⁸. Visits per resident were low compared to the average for the comparator

¹⁷ Opening hours are calculated on bands of data given in the CIPFA report, rather than actual hours which are not available. This means that the figures must be approximate but are generally good enough to give an overall impression.

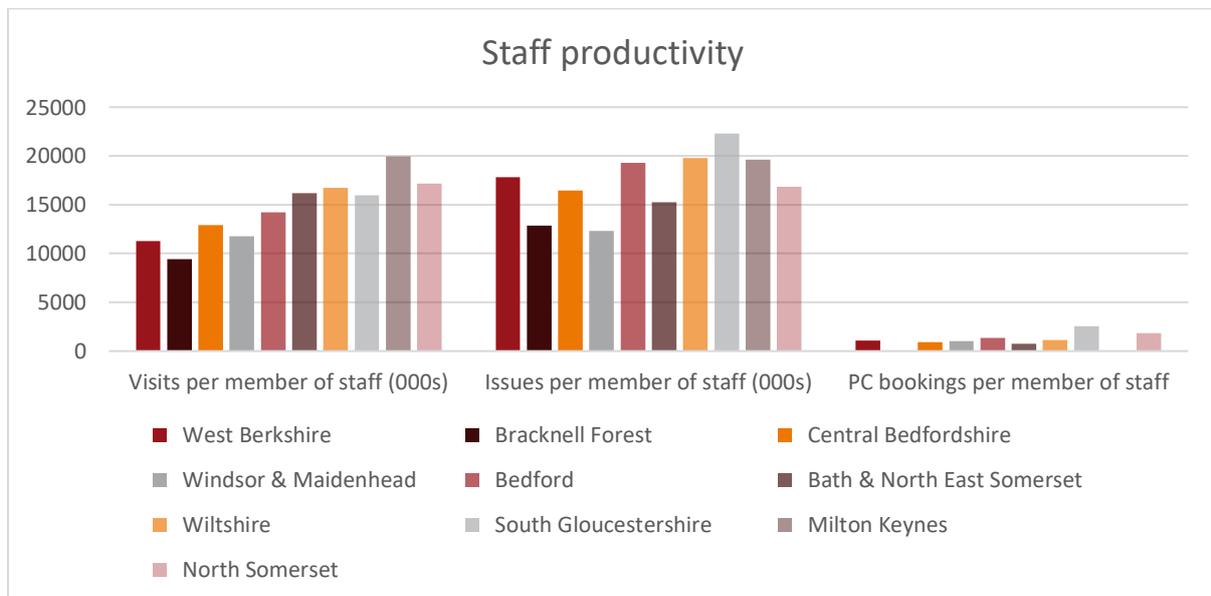
¹⁸ Bracknell Forest and Milton Keynes did not submit figures on computer usage

group, although issues were above average. The usage of library computers was on the low side and the number of housebound users below average, although this figure is distorted by some relatively high returns from some authorities.

Provision of staff

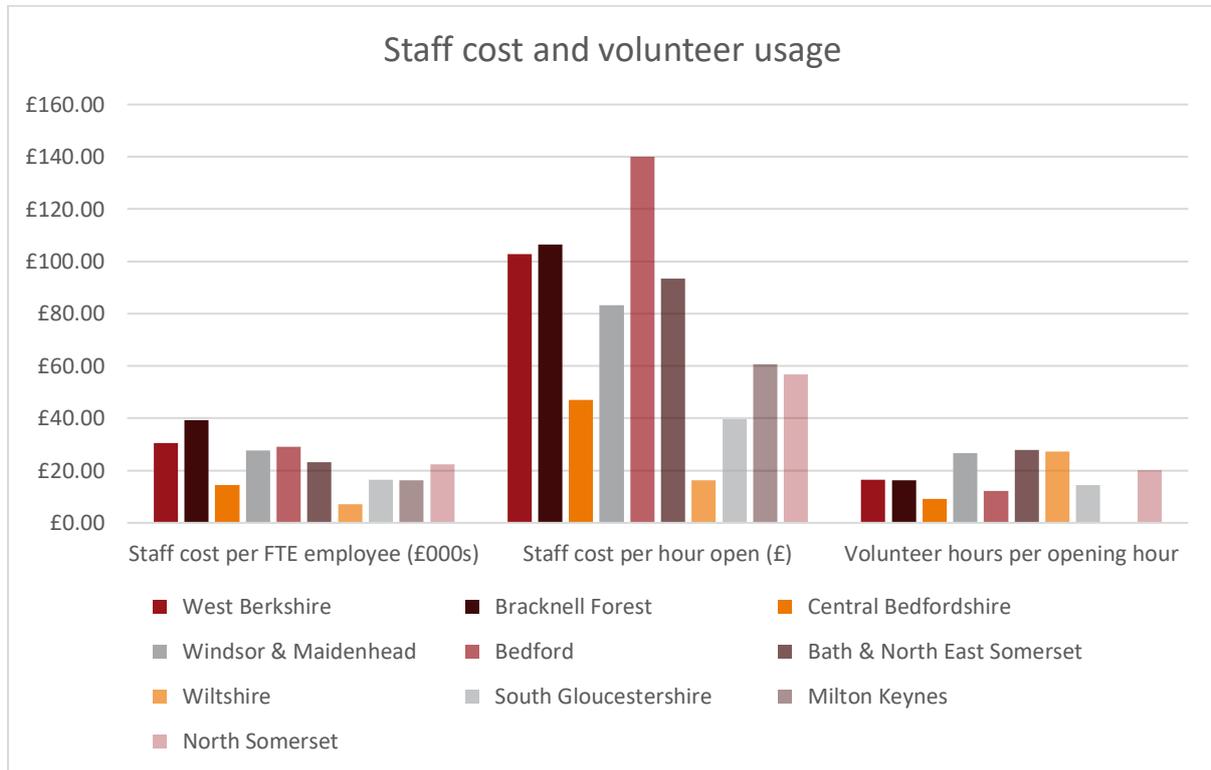


Staffing is the single highest element of expenditure in any library service and it is vitally important that staffing costs are controlled to achieve value for money. The chart above shows that the number of staff provided in West Berkshire is slightly above the average for the comparator group. Staff costs per visitor were high, although as WBL has a high proportion of issues to visits, the staff cost per issue was lower, although still well above the average for the group.



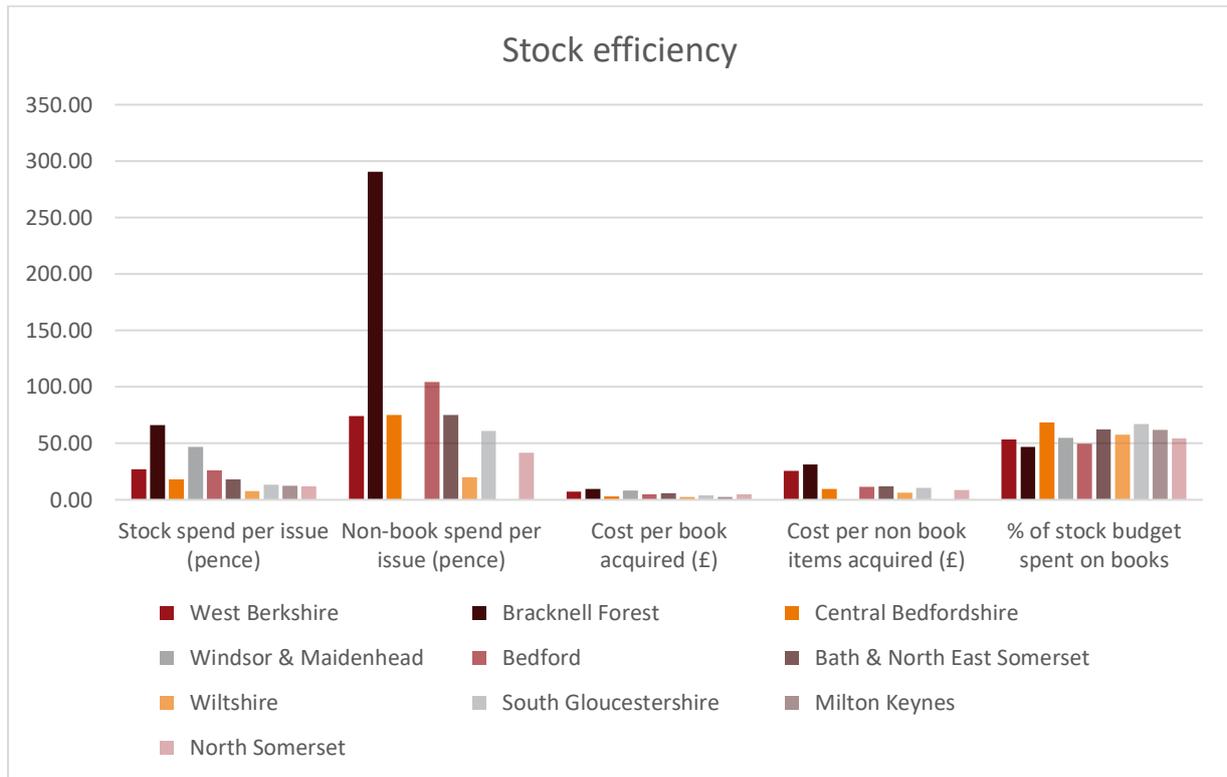
This chart shows staff productivity in relation to the services actually provided to the public. The pattern observed previously where WBL performs better in relation to issues than to visits is reflected in these figures, so that the number of visits per member of staff is well

below the average but the issues per member of staff is above average. Stock transactions are labour intensive, even at libraries where – like Newbury – uptake of self-service kiosks is high. Like many library services outside major centres of population, computer usage in West Berkshire is low.



The average cost per member of staff is 50% higher than the average for the comparator group. This figure is skewed by an extraordinarily low cost in Wiltshire, but even if that figure is excluded West Berkshire is well above average. Similarly, staffing costs for each hour open was high, indicating that staffing levels may need to be reviewed. The use of volunteers in WBLS was around the average for the comparator group, but services like Windsor and Maidenhead, Bath and North East Somerset and Wiltshire all indicate that more can be done to attract volunteers.

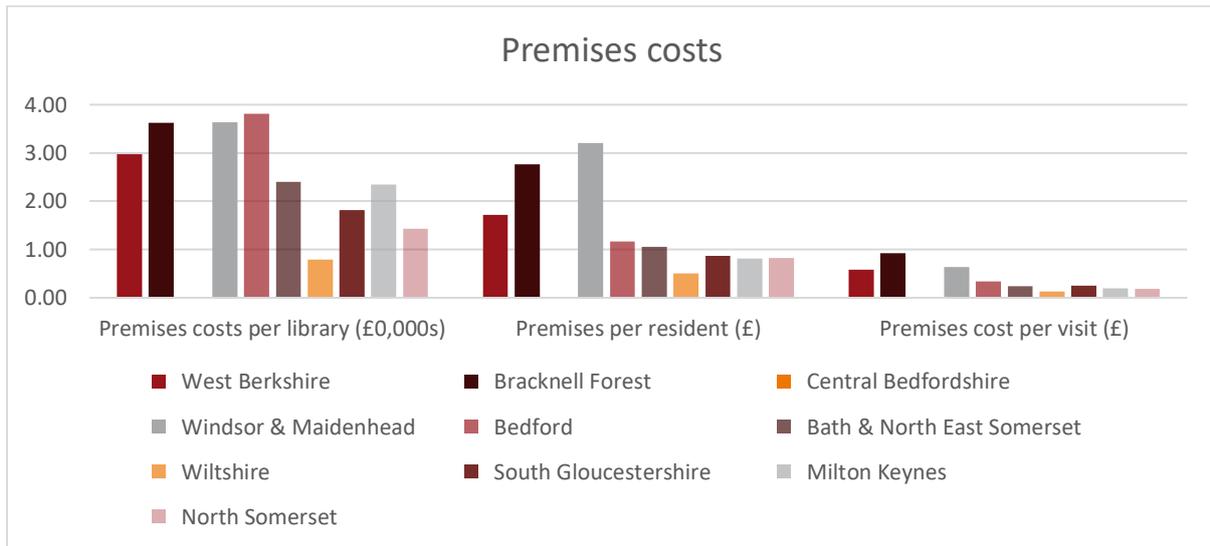
Stock



The chart above analyses how stock budgets performed in different authorities, although Windsor and Maidenhead did not provide data on non-book items. Although West Berkshire has relatively high issues per resident and per visit, the spending on stock was high. The return on stock investment in West Berkshire – at 27p per issue - was worse than the average for the comparator authorities of 19p. This figure is distorted by a very good return from Wiltshire, but stock efficiency is higher in South Gloucester, Milton Keynes and North Somerset. The picture can be distorted by high levels of spending on expensive formats (such as DVDs) or on resources which, although valuable to the public, do not result in issues like newspapers or online resources. The percentage of expenditure on books in West Berkshire is relatively low as a proportion of the overall stock budget, and investment in talking books and online resources is high, and this partly accounts for the lower return.

54% of West Berkshire’s stock budget was spent on books, rather lower than the average for the comparator group. 88% of issues were books, but the proportion of non-book issues was the highest within the group. The average cost of non-book items added to stock was £25.54, reflecting the high spend on adult talking books, and although not all comparator authorities provided data, this appears well above the likely average. Similarly, the cost paid per book is on the high side for the comparator groups, although only just above average nationally. West Berkshire has reduced its stock spend considerably since 2014/15 which is likely to affect comparative performance but may consider reviewing its stock acquisition policy to bring costs in line with higher performing authorities.

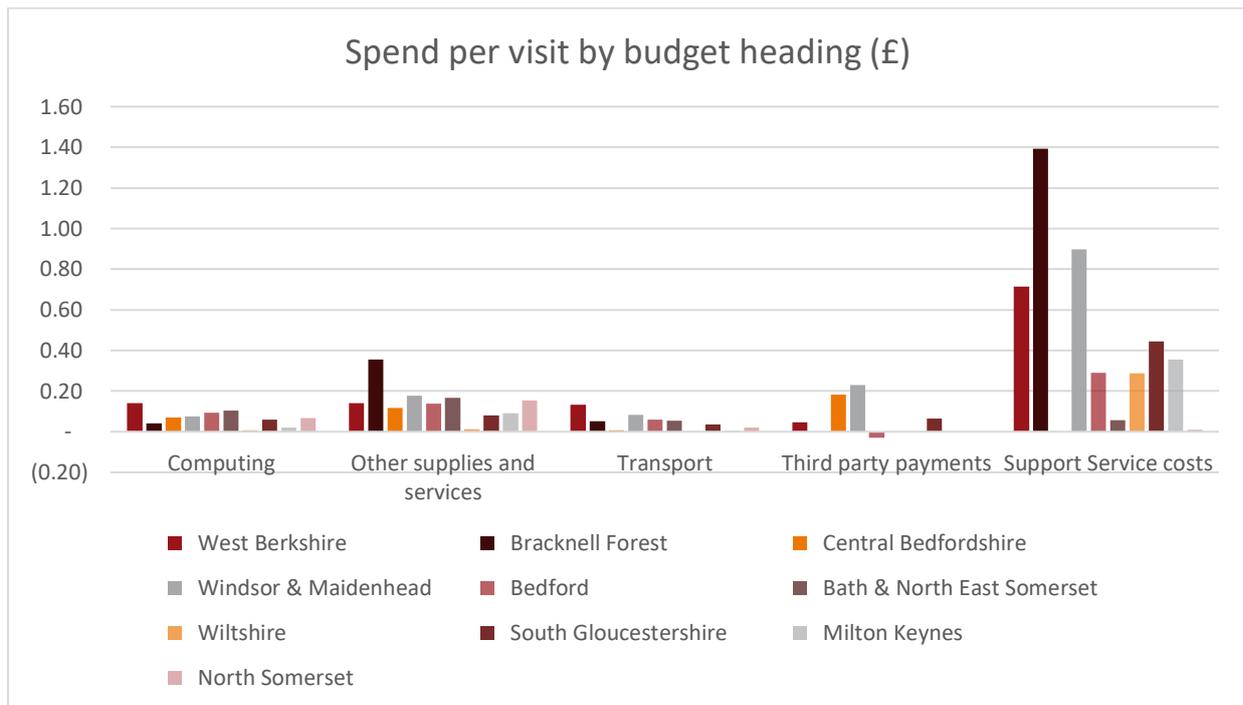
Premises



Nearly half of the spend on premises in West Berkshire is at Newbury Library. The cost of premises per library was in line with other authorities, except for Central Bedfordshire which clearly has a different accounting methodology. The premises cost per resident was high however, partially accounted for by a relatively generous provision of library branches in West Berkshire, and since the number of visits per resident is comparatively low, the premises cost per visit is high. It is fair to say that property costs across all library services are difficult to compare as a variety of methods are used to allocate costs in the authority accounts.

Nevertheless, it appears that property costs are rather high for WBL. This is likely to be accounted for in part by the fact that many elements of property costs – for example business rates – are fixed and therefore if the hours a branch is open are low, then the unit cost is increased on some measures.

Computing, transport, other supplies and services and support costs



These budget headings together account for almost a quarter of gross revenue spend in West Berkshire, with the great majority in support service costs.

Computing cost are high in relation to other services. This is partly due to the state of the market in library management system supply, where prices to a smaller service are not significantly different to those for a larger service.

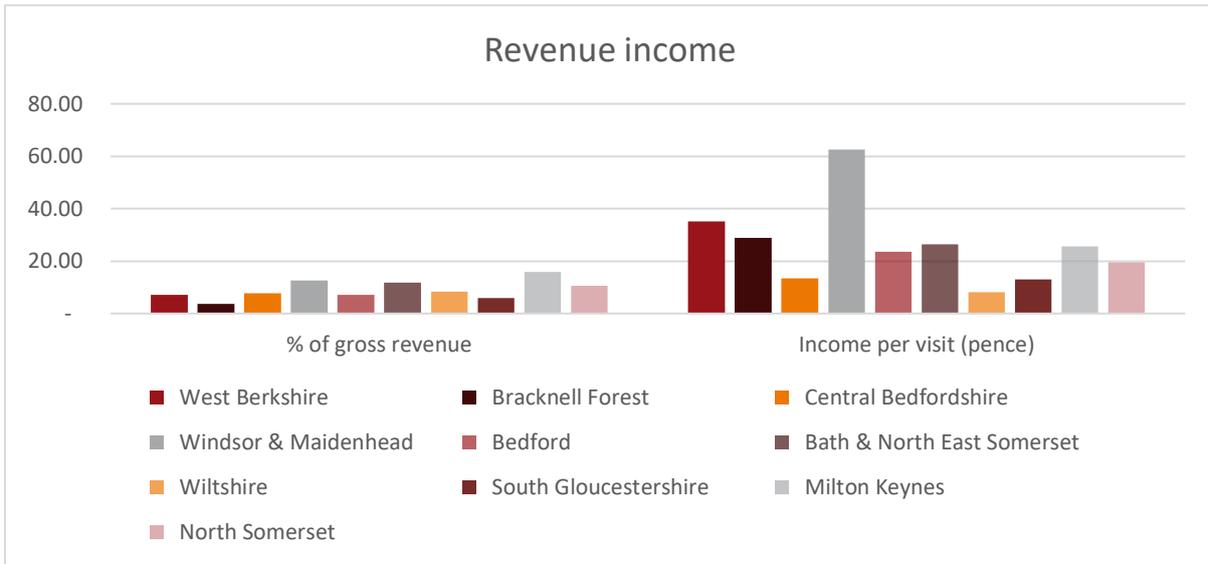
Other supplies and services are generally items that can be controlled fully by the library services and are in line with other authorities. West Berkshire's spending is in line with the rest of the group.

Transport costs are high, due largely to the provision of the two mobile libraries. However, transport is only a very small proportion of the total budget.

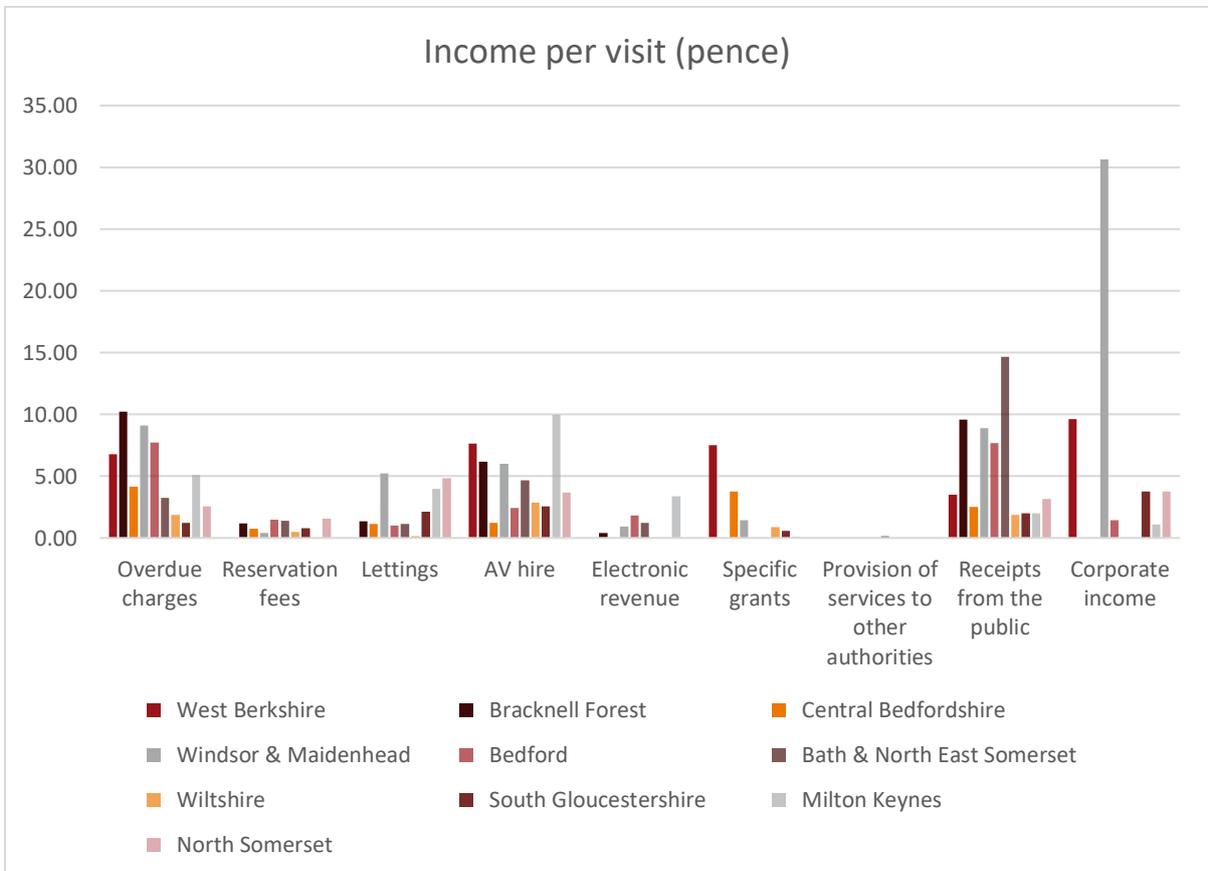
Third party payment are low, and have been reduced by about 90% in the 2015/16 financial year.

Support services costs are very high, although these are normally outside the control of the library service.

Revenue income



Revenue income in WBL is average compared to comparators but is high when adjusted for customer levels.



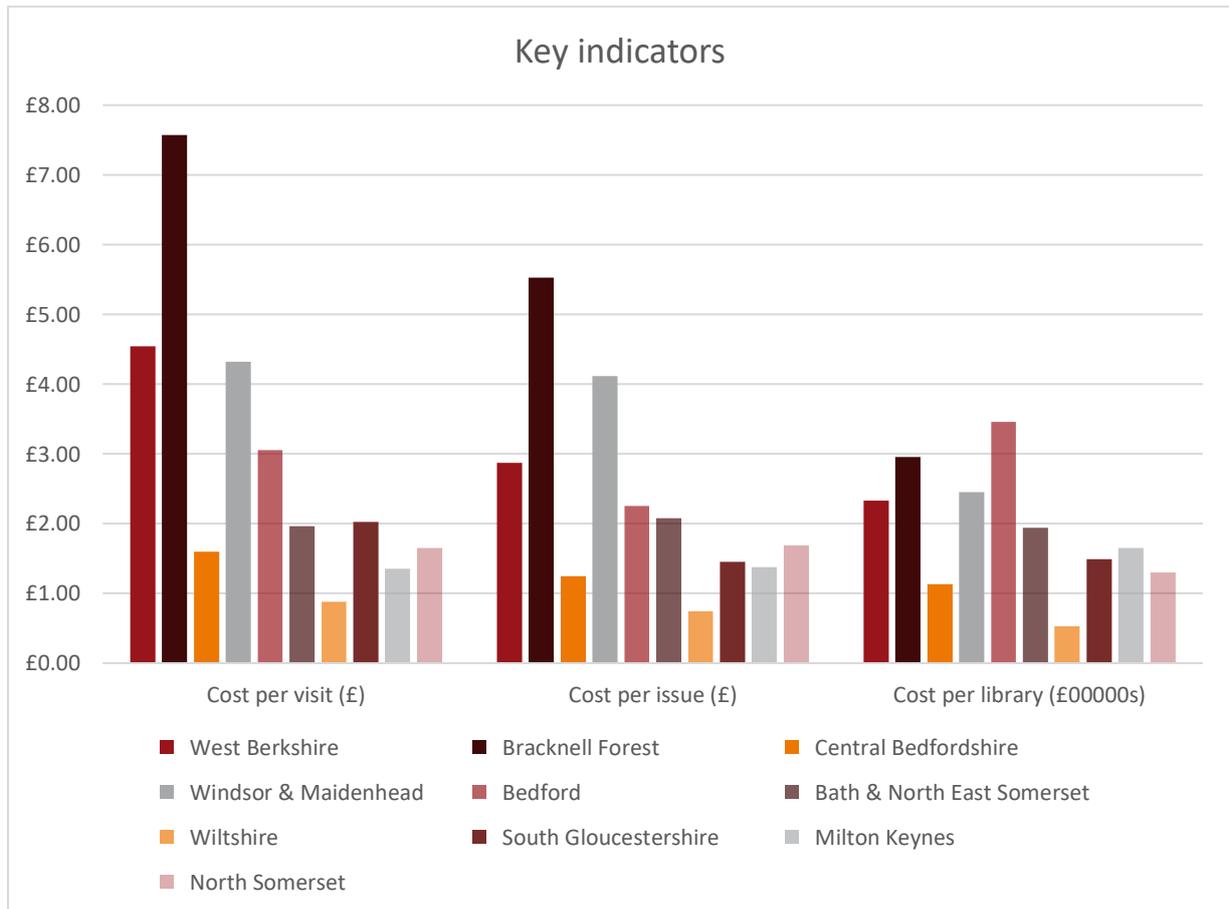
West Berkshire does not charge fees for reservations or any electronic services and was therefore below the average for the group. These represent very small amounts in the overall service budget and it may be that WBLs considers these concessions a useful contribution to the library offer.

West Berkshire is doing well in collecting overdue fees and for the hire of audio visual stock. Other receipts from the public can include a multitude of charges and activities but reprographic charges is normally a major element. In this respect, WBLs was about average in terms of its performance.

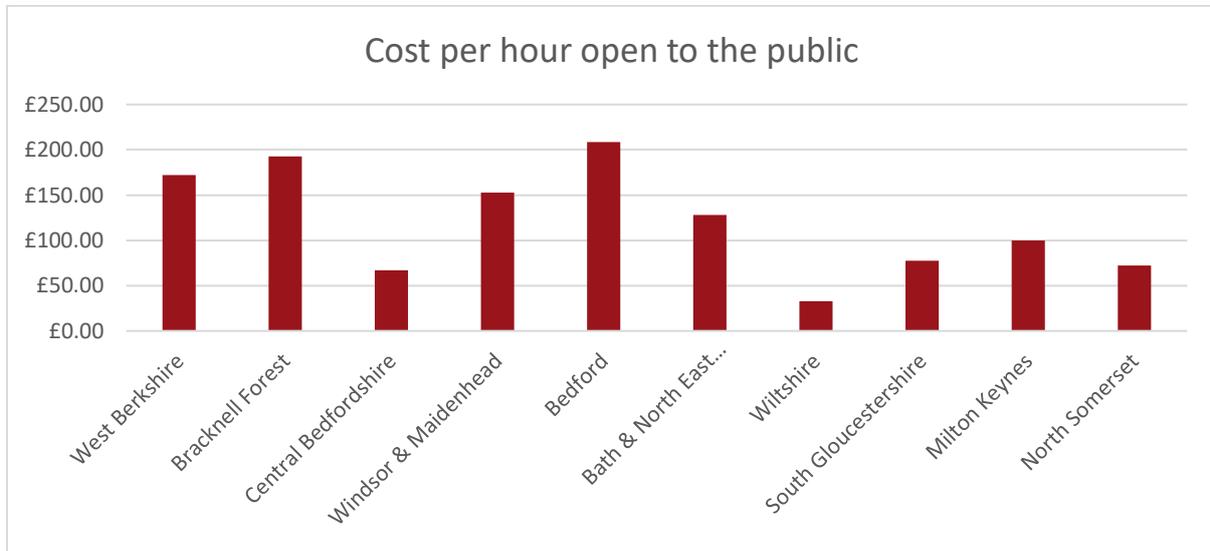
The high level of corporate income is an indication that the work that the service is providing beyond that of a traditional library service was recognised in 2014/15. However, this income does not appear to have been received in the 2015/16 financial year.

Perhaps the most significant issue in the analysis of income is the lack of income from lettings in West Berkshire. This is of course not only dependent on local charging policies but also on the availability of space for hire. However, for a service which has a number of libraries which are not open for long hours, there is the potential to make good use of the space during closed times through hire of the facilities.

Value for money



The ultimate determinate of the value that a library service delivers is the cost for each visit. Amongst its comparator group, West Berkshire was at the high end. There are a number of reasons for this which have been discussed above, but this metric is determined by the number of visits to the service, and this is low in comparison to other authorities. Cost per issue is also high, although the difference here is less marked, whilst the cost per library is more in line with other library services.



When this data is adjusted to reflect the number of opening hours offered, West Berkshire's unit costs remain high. Wiltshire and Central Bedfordshire have unusually low costs for staff and premises respectively, and these authorities cannot be regarded as a fair comparison in this respect. However, it is clear that West Berkshire is more expensive by a number of measures than the average for its comparator group.

There are a number of budget headings where West Berkshire is performing well or at the average, but others where there could be a need for improvement. Staffing costs are high and by some measures productivity is low. Whilst volunteers are already being engaged, there is scope for increasing numbers. West Berkshire's customers clearly value the stock provided, as indicated by the high number of issues per visit, but the return on stock investment could be improved. Premises costs, too, are high due to the large number of libraries with short hours and low visits and issues. Revenue income is good, but if it is possible to rent out space could be improved. The revenue budget for 2015/16 is considerably lower than that for the previous year and it is likely that there will be improvement in comparative performance when the next CIPFA figures are released.

Appendix D: all library datasheets

Burghfield Common Library

School Lane
Burghfield Common
Reading
West Berkshire
RG7 3JZ

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 19 hours per week over 5 days (8.3%)
- visits: 18,640 (4.7%)
- physical issues at branch: 29,103 (5.6% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 38,079 (6.4%)
- active borrowers: 994 (5.0%)
- active borrowers only using home branch: 61.2% (5)
- of which male: 35.3%
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 97.8% (2)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 90.9% (4)
- PC hours used: 385 (1.1%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: 0 (0%)
- issues per visit: 2.0
- visits associated with events: 1,091(2.9%)

Trends

Stock issues at Burghfield Common have risen 7.7% since 2004/5, but reached a peak in 2013/14. There was a decline of 26.7% between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £32,850

Of which:

- staff: £27,500
- premises: £11,500
- income: £3,550
- cost per visit: £1.48 (4)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £1.95 (5=)
- cost per issue: £0.96 (2)
- PC hours used: £94.55 (8)
- Wi-Fi minutes: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- cost per active borrower: £36.62 (4)
- cost per hour: £38.32 (2)
- staff cost per hour: £28.95 (1)
- premises costs per hour: £12.11 (4)
- income per visit: £0.19 (8)

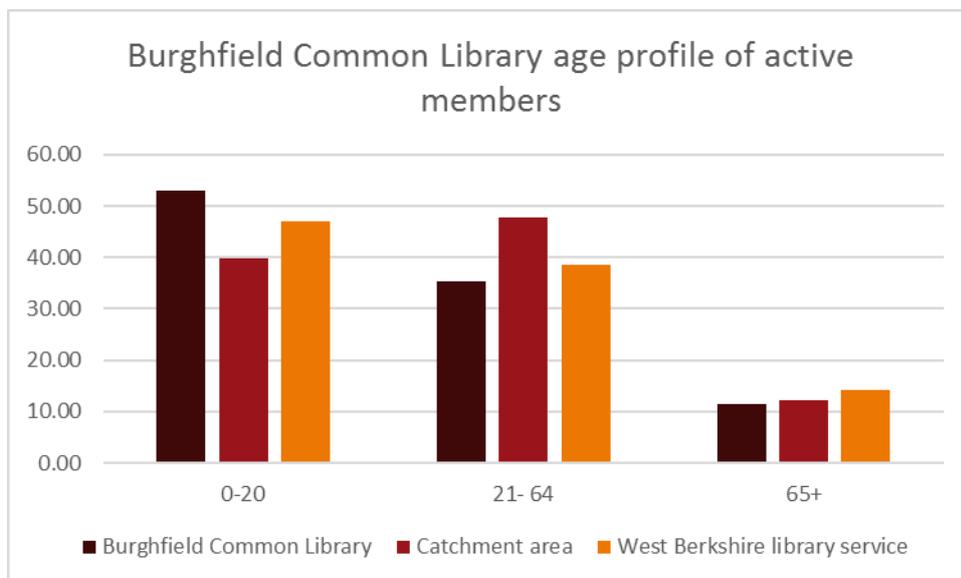
Take up of activities

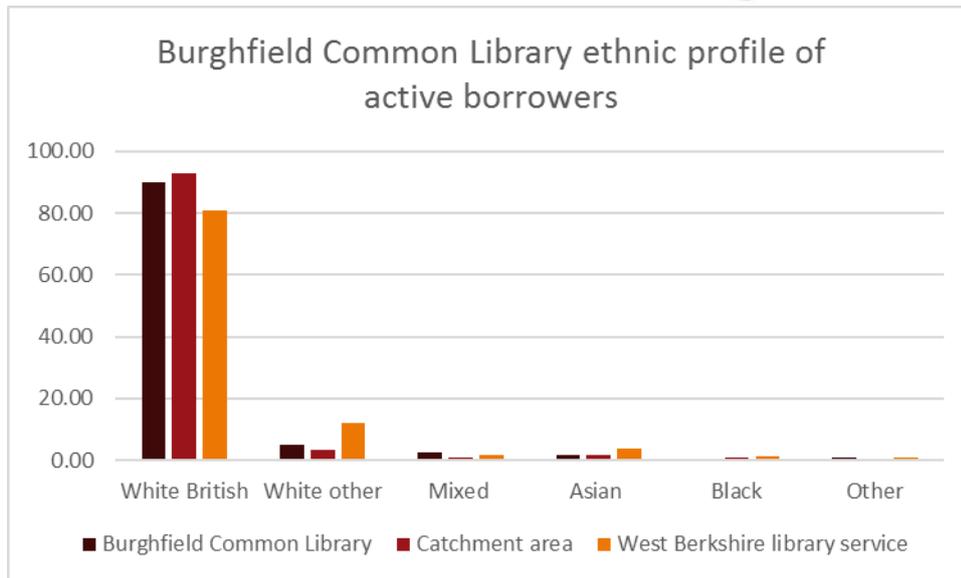
- visits per hour: 19.6 (7)
- issues per hour: 40.1 (3)
- PC bookings per hour available: 67.8% (2)

Wards included in catchment area

Burghfield

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 77% (4)¹⁹
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 12.7% (1)
- residents with no qualifications: 15.3% (4)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 9% (2)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 8.3% (2)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 30% (9)²⁰

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 30.7% (1)
- distance to next nearest library: 2 miles (Mortimer) (8 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 15 miles (1 hour 20 minutes by public transport)

¹⁹ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

²⁰ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Hungerford Library

Church Street
Hungerford
West Berkshire
RG17 0JG

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 26 hours per week over 4 days (11.4%)
- visits: 36,405 (9.2%)
- physical issues at branch: 33,121 (6.4% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 43,337 (7.2%)
- active members: 1,545 (7.7%)
- active members only using home branch: 64.1% (3)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 83.2% (7)
- of which male: 31.4%
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 85.1% (5)
- PC hours used: 1,779 (4.9%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: 35,493 (5.3%)
- issues per visit: 1.2
- visits associated with events: 3,123 (7.2%)

Trends

Stock issues at Hungerford rose sharply in the period 2004 – 2008 but have declined ever since probably due to an increase of web renewals. Issues for 2015/16 are 11.8% below 2004/5 levels and 18.2% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £51,100

Of which

- staff: £42,900
- premises: £32,300
- income: £12,550
- staff cost per visit: £1.18 (2)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £1.75 (3)
- issue: £1.47 (6)
- PC hours used: £35.79 (4)
- Wi-Fi minutes: £1.79 (2)
- cost per active borrower: £41.20 (6)
- cost per cost per hour: £48.96 (7)
- staff cost per hour: £33.00 (4)
- premises costs per hour: £28.85 (6)
- income per visit: £0.34 (2)

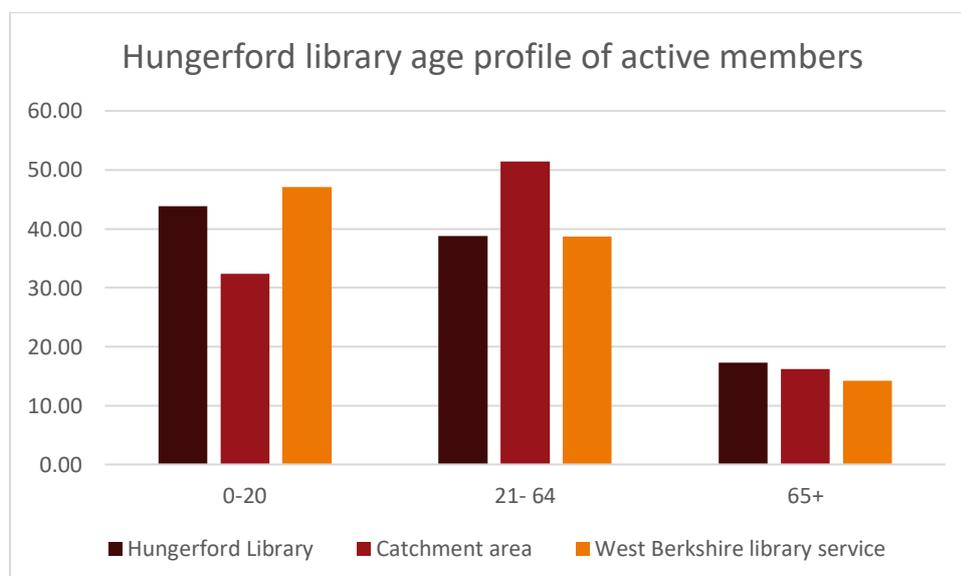
Take up of activities

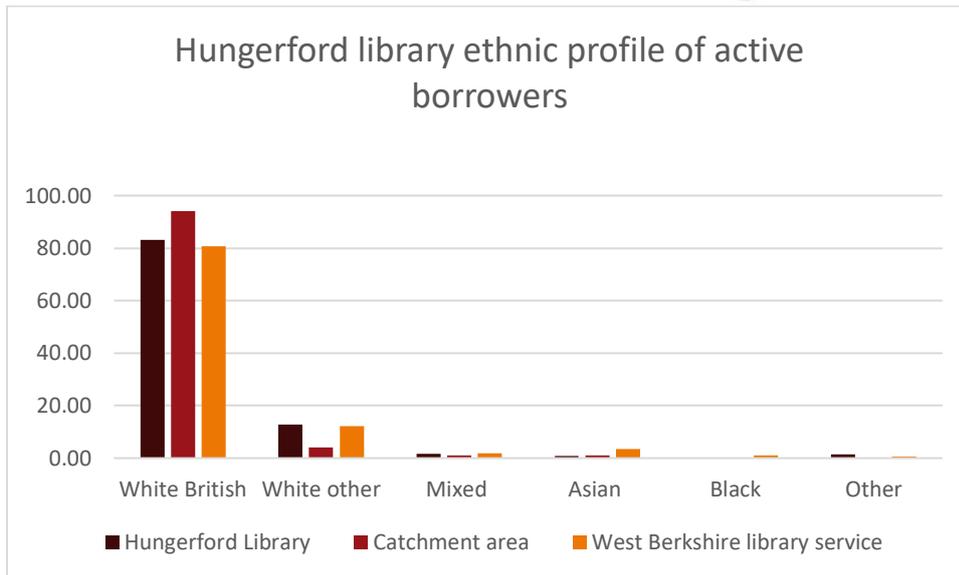
- visits per hour: 28.0 (3)
- issues per hour: 30.3 (4)
- PC bookings per hour available: 42.1% (7)

Wards included in catchment area

Hungerford

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 68% (7)²¹
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 16% (9)
- residents with no qualifications: 20% (8)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 9% (2)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 15% (9)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 77% (1)²²

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 41.0% (4)
- distance to next nearest library: 9 miles (Lambourn) (1 hour 22 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 10 miles (26 minutes by public transport)

²¹ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

²² This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Lambourn Library

High Street
Lambourn
West Berkshire
RG17 8XL

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 15 hours per week over 4 days (6.6%)
- visits: 14,264 (3.6%)
- physical issues at branch: 15,102 (2.9% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 19,760 (3.3%)
- active members: 639 (3.2%)
- of which male: 30.4%
- active members only using home branch: 78.1% (1)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 93.9% (4)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 70.8% (8)
- PC hours used: 621 (1.7%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- issues per visit: 1.4
- visits associated with events: 1,529 (6.5%)

Trends

Stock issues at Lambourn remained static in the period 2004 – 2008 and have since declined probably due to web renewals. Issues for 2015/16 are 38.2% below 2004/5 levels and 15.5% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £34,500

Of which:

- staff: £29,300
- premises: £10,750
- income: £3,000
- staff cost per visit: £2.05 (7)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £2.63 (8)
- cost per issue: £1.90 (9)
- PC hours used: £60.39 (6)
- Wi-Fi minutes: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- cost per active borrower: £58.69 (8)
- cost per hour: £50.00 (8)
- staff cost per hour: £39.07 (8)
- premises costs per hour: £14.33 (5)
- income per visit: £0.21 (5)

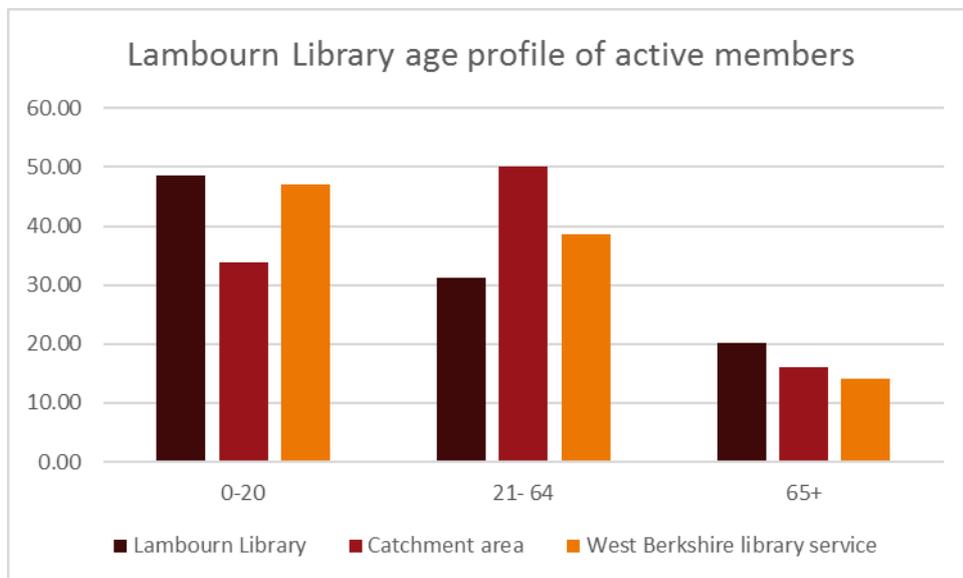
Take up of activities

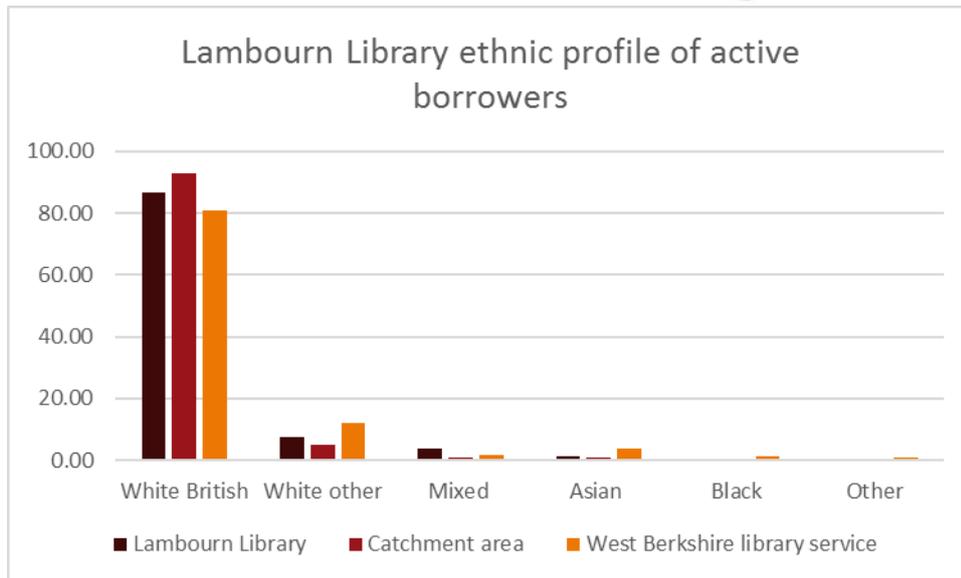
- visits per hour: 19.0 (8)
- issues per hour: 26.4 (8)
- PC bookings per hour available: 44.0% (6)

Wards included in catchment area

Lambourn Valley

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 63% (9)²³
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 14% (3)
- residents with no qualifications: 21% (9)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 9% (2)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 12% (7)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 39% (8)²⁴

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 42.0% (6)
- distance to next nearest library: 9 miles (Hungerford) (1 hour 22 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 14 miles (46 minutes by public transport)

²³ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

²⁴ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Mortimer Library

27 Victoria Road
Mortimer Common
Reading
West Berkshire
RG7 3SH

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 19 hours per week over 4 days (8.3%)
- visits: 18,860 (4.8%)
- physical issues at branch: 22,225 (4.3% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 29,080 (4.9%)
- active members: 865 (4.3%)
- active members only using home branch: 70.4% (2)
- of which males: 33.2%
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 95.0% (3)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 83.6% (6)
- PC hours used: 505 (1.4%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- issues per visit: 1.5
- visits associated with events: 1,299 (5.5%)

Trends

Stock issues at Mortimer rose during the period 2004 – 2012 despite the introduction of web based renewals but have declined sharply since then. Issues for 2015/16 are 28.0% below 2004/5 levels and 17.2% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £30,700

Of which

- staff: £31,900
- premises: £10,350
- income: £6,000
- staff cost per visit: £1.69 (6)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £1.95 (5=)
- cost per issue: £1.26 (4)
- PC hours used: £72.67 (7)
- Wi-Fi minutes: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- cost per active borrower: £42.43 (7)
- cost per hour: £38.63 (3)
- staff cost per hour: £33.58 (5)
- premises costs per hour: £10.89 (3)
- income per visit: £0.32 (3)

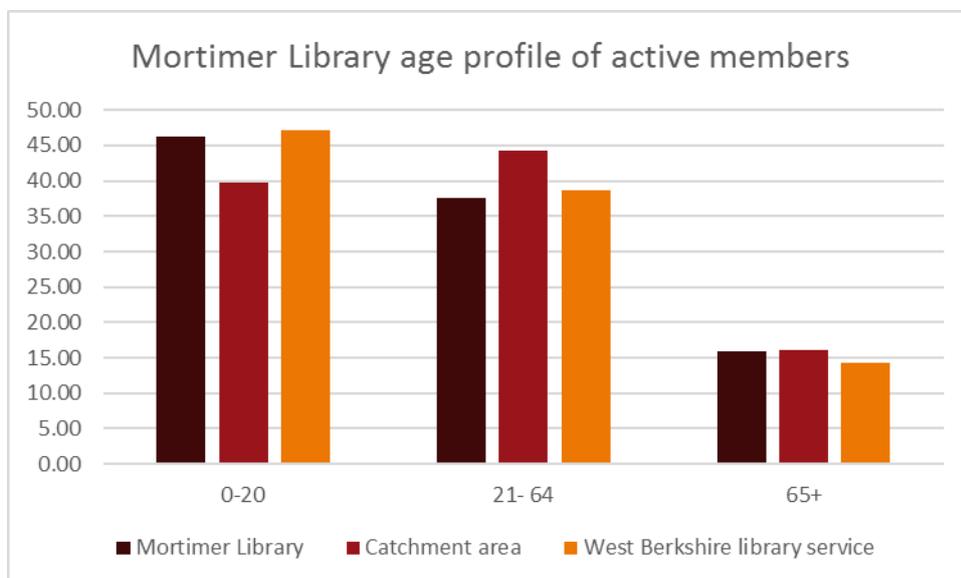
Take up of activities

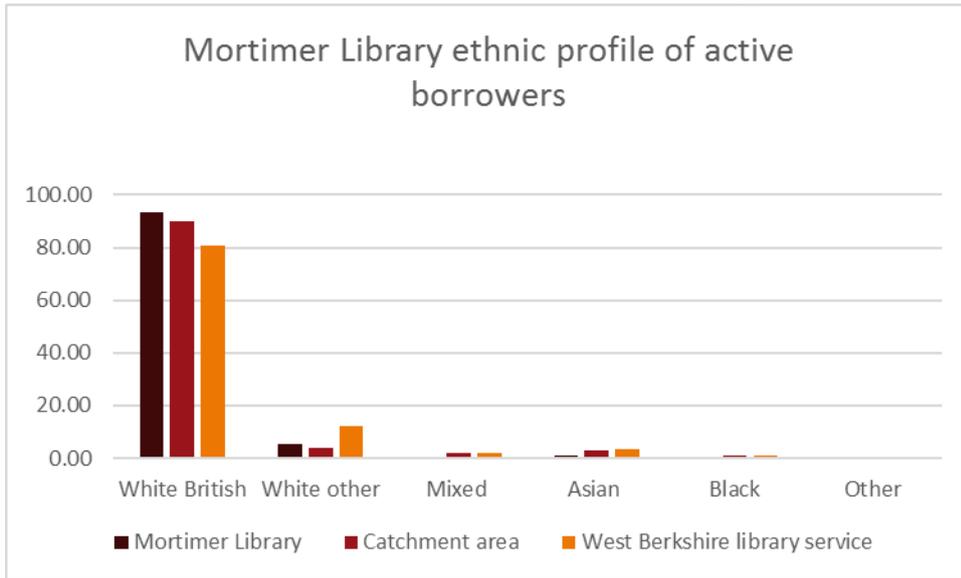
- visits per hour: 19.9 (6)
- issues per hour: 30.6 (7)
- PC bookings per hour available: 52.4% (4)

Wards included in catchment area

Mortimer

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 72% (5)²⁵
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 14% (3)
- residents with no qualifications: 15% (3)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 11% (9)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 11% (4)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 52% (5)²⁶

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 33.0% (2)
- distance to next nearest library: : 2 miles (Burghfield Common) (8 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 13 miles (1 hour 22 minutes by public transport)

²⁵ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

²⁶ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Newbury Library

The Wharf
Newbury
West Berkshire
RG14 5AU

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 49.5 hours per week over 6 days (21.7%)
- visits: 181,405 (44.7%)
- physical issues at branch: 224,436 (46.0% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 263,661 (49.0%)
- active members: 10,028 (49.9%)
- of which males: 37.7%
- active members only using home branch: 51.1% (7)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 88.0% (6)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 91.0% (3)
- PC hours used: 25,458 (69.5%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: 626,115 (94.2%)
- issues per visit: 1.6
- visits associated with events: 9,182 (39.3%)

Trends

Stock issues at Newbury have declined year on year since 2006 and have shown the greatest relative fall of any library in the service since 2004. Issues for 2015/16 are 51.3% below 2004/5 levels and 6.6% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £452,859

Of which:

- staff: £398,859²⁷
- premises: £141,350
- income: £46,600
- staff cost per visit: £2.19 (9)

²⁷ Including 2.04 FTE Librarians and 1.42 FTE Enquiry Assistants

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £2.75 (9)
- cost per issue: £1.70 (7)
- PC hours used: £19.62 (3)
- Wi-Fi minutes: £0.80 (1)
- cost per active borrower: £49.81 (5)
- cost per hour: £201.80 (9)
- staff cost per hour: £160.83 (9)
- premises costs per hour: £57.80 (9)
- income per visit: £0.26 (4)

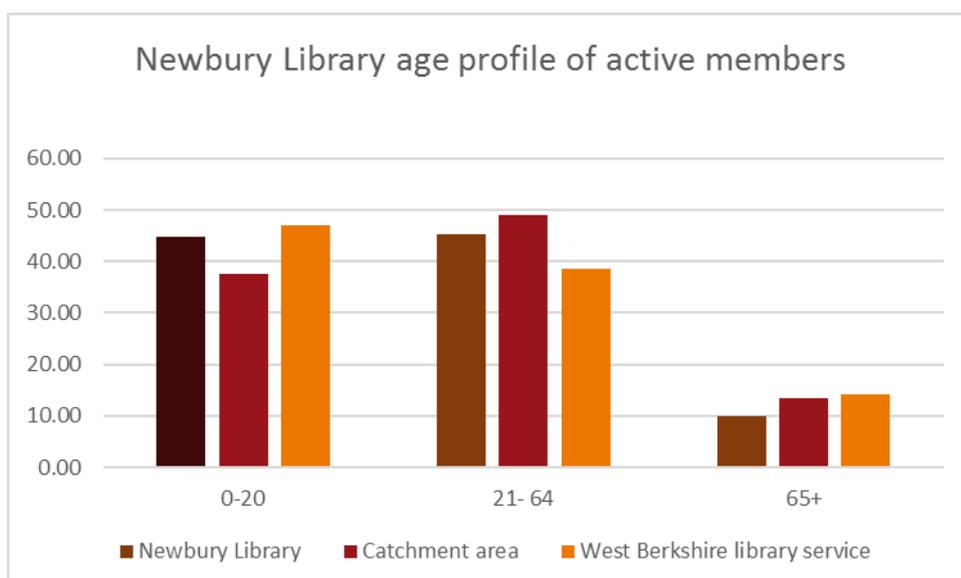
Take up of activities

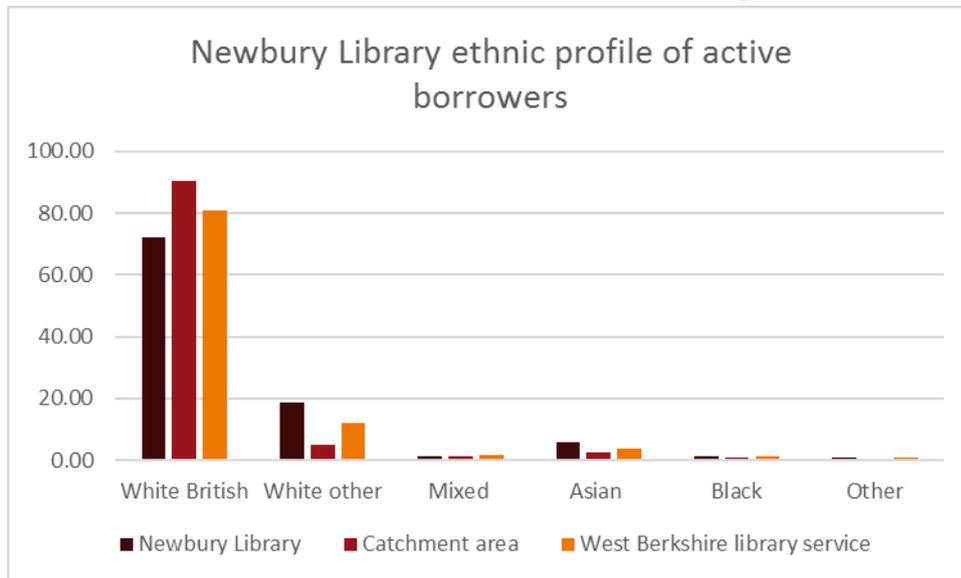
- visits per hour: 73.3 (1)
- issues per hour: 118.7 (1)
- PC bookings per hour available: 26.4% (9)

Wards included in catchment area

Aldermaston	Cold Ash	Greenham	St Johns
Bucklebury	Compton	Kintbury	Victoria
Chieveley	Downlands	Northcroft	
Clay Hill	Falkland	Speen	

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 72% (5)²⁸
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 14% (5)
- residents with no qualifications: 17% (5)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 9% (5)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 13% (8)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 46% (7)²⁹

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- Working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 52.2% (7)
- Distance to next nearest library: 3 miles (Thatcham) (21 minutes by public transport)

²⁸ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

²⁹ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Pangbourne Library

Reading Road
Pangbourne
Reading
West Berkshire
RG8 7LY

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 22 hours per week over 5 days (9.6%)
- visits: 23,056 (5.7%)
- physical issues at branch: 27,752 (5.9% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 36,312 (6.1%)
- active members: 1,142 (5.7%)
- of which males: 31.4%
- active members only using home branch: 63.0% (4)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 84.9% (8)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 92.2% (2)
- PC hours used: 735 (2.0%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: 2,859 (0.4%)
- issues per visit: 1.6
- visits associated with events: 1,500 (6.4%)

Trends

Stock issues at Pangbourne remained stable during the period 2004 – 2012 despite the introduction of web based renewals but have declined sharply since then. Issues for 2015/16 are 29.3% below 2004/5 levels and 8.6% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £35,750

Of which

- Staff: £35,640
- Premises: £9,450
- Income: £4,850
- Staff cost per visit: £1.55 (5)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £1.76 (4)
- cost per issue: £1.12 (3)
- PC hours used: £55.24 (5)
- Wi-Fi minutes: £14.20 (3)
- cost per active borrower: £35.55 (3)
- cost per hour: £36.91 (1)
- staff cost per hour: £32.41 (3)
- premises costs per hour: £8.59 (1)
- income per visit: £0.21 (6)

Take up of activities

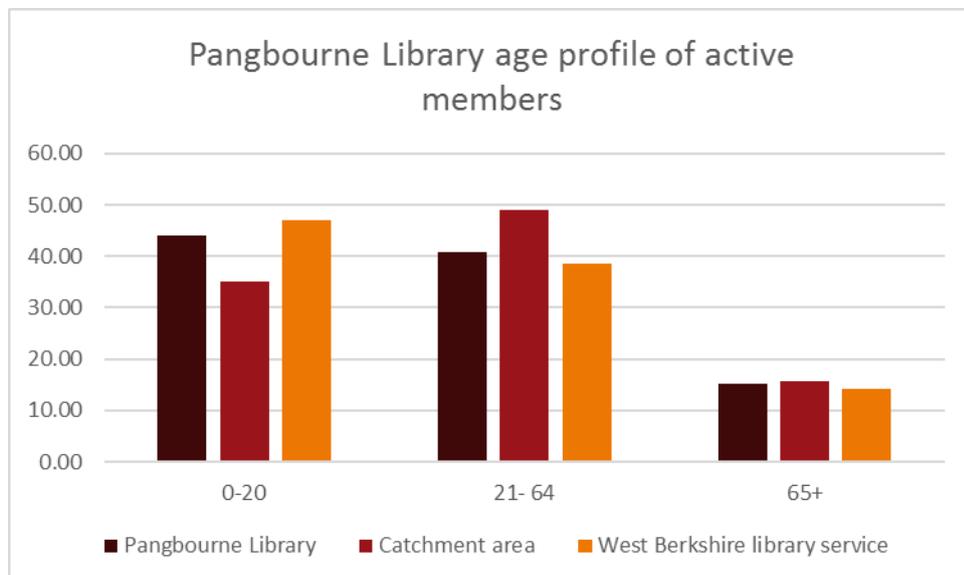
- visits per hour: 21.0 (5)
- issues per hour: 33.0 (5)
- PC bookings per hour available: 55.7% (3)

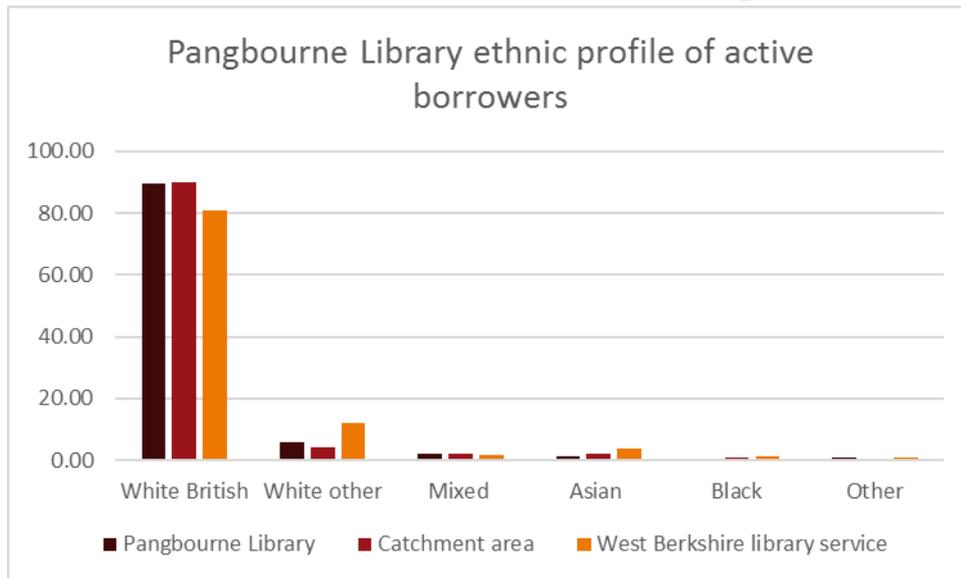
Wards included in catchment area

Pangbourne

Purley on Thames

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 87% (1)³⁰
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 14% (6)
- residents with no qualifications: 13% (1)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 11% (8)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 8% (1)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 51% (6)³¹

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 36.0% (3)
- distance to next nearest library: 4 miles (Theale) (12 minutes by public transport but an infrequent service; 1 hour 12 minutes more regular service)
- distance to Newbury library: 16 miles (55 minutes by public transport)

³⁰ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

³¹ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Thatcham Library

Bath Road
Thatcham
West Berkshire
RG18 3AG

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 35 hours per week over 5 days (15.3%)
- visits: 50,497 (12.8%)
- physical issues at branch: 58,411 (11.2% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 70,427 (12.8%)
- active members: 2,574 (12.8%)
- of which males: 35.4%
- active members only using home branch: 52.7% (6)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 98.5% (1)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 71.3% (7)
- PC hours used: 3,796 (10.4%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- issues per visit: 1.5
- visits associated with events: 1,923 (8.2%)

Trends

Stock issues at Thatcham remained stable during the period 2004 – 2010 despite the introduction of web based renewals but have declined sharply since then. Issues for 2015/16 are 45.5% below 2004/5 levels and 8.4% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £58,100

Of which

- staff: £61,250
- premises: £16,000
- income: £10,000
- staff cost per visit: £1.21 (3)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £1.35 (1)
- cost per issue: £0.89 (1)
- PC hours used: £17.94 (2)
- Wi-Fi minutes: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- cost per active borrower: £26.46 (1)
- cost per hour: £38.91 (4)
- staff cost per hour: £35.60 (6)
- premises costs per hour: £9.14 (7)
- income per visit: £0.20 (7)

Take up of activities

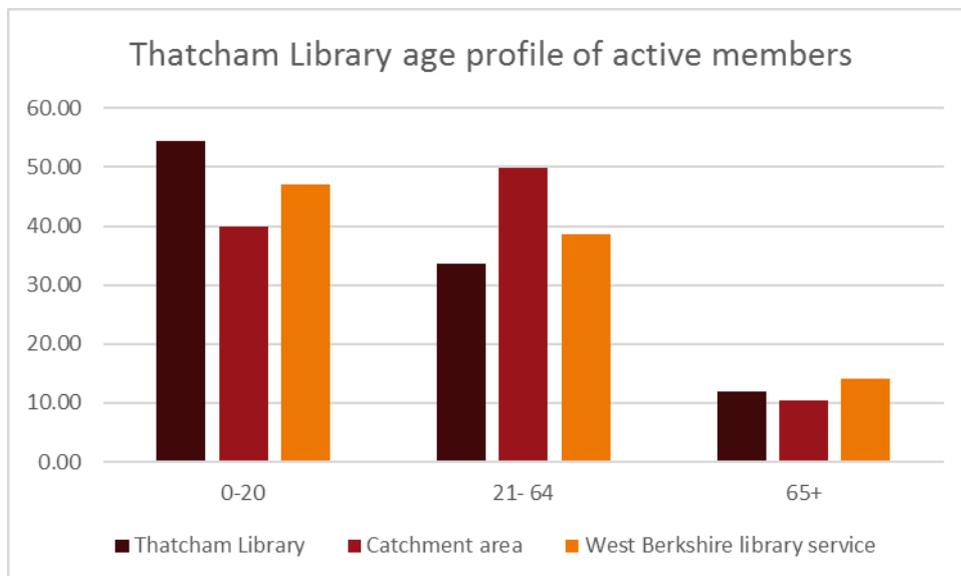
- visits per hour: 28.9 (2)
- issues per hour: 43.7 (2)
- PC bookings per hour available: 33.9% (8)

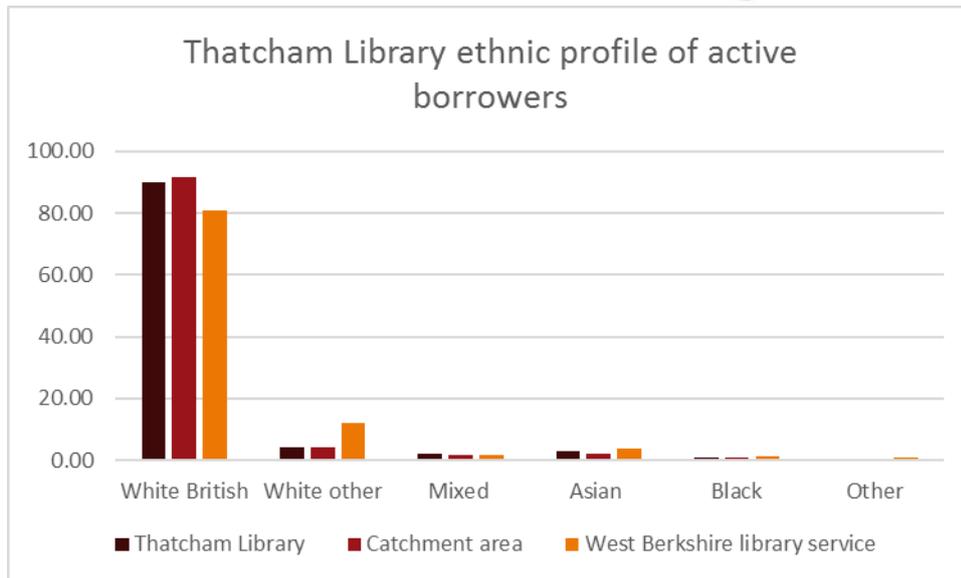
Wards included in catchment area

Thatcham Central
Thatcham North

Thatcham South and Crookham
Thatcham West

Demographic comparisons





Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 68% (7)³²
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 15% (7)
- residents with no qualifications: 18% (6)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 8% (1)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 12% (5)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 73% (2)³³

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 54.0% (8)
- distance to next nearest library: 3 miles (Newbury) (21 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 3 miles (21 minutes by public transport)

³² The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

³³ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Theale Library

Church Street
Theale
Reading
West Berkshire
RG7 5BZ

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 26 hours per week over 5 days (11.4%)
- visits: 36,332 (9.2%)
- physical issues at branch: 31,038 (6.0% of entire service)³⁴
- issues including remote renewals: 40,611 (6.8%)³⁵
- active members: 1,747 (8.7%)
- of which males: 38.8%
- active members only using home branch: 46.3% (8)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 88.2% (5)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 97.5% (1)
- PC hours used: 3,063 (8.4%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- issues per visit: 1.1
- visits associated with events: 3,006 (12.9%)

Trends

Stock issues at Theale increased during the period 2004 – 2011 despite the introduction of web based renewals but have declined sharply since then. Issues for 2015/16 are 19.3% below 2004/5 levels and 5.0% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £51,400

Of which:

- staff: £38,600

³⁴ A proportion of these are associated with school use. The likely level of public library visits is in the region of 24,000 to 26,000

³⁵ A proportion of these are associated with school use. The likely level of public library issues is in the region of 26,000 to 28,000

- premises: £44,800
- income: £32,000
- staff cost per visit: £1.06 (1)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least. There must be a significant caveat on these rankings, as the figures are somewhat skewed by school usage. Some transactions take place outside the hours when the library is staffed, and some use of the library is supervised by teachers rather than library staff. This has the effect of increasing the relative performance of the library in most of these measures.³⁶

- cost per visit: £1.43 (2)
- cost per issue: £1.28 (5)
- PC hours used: £16.94 (1)
- Wi-Fi minutes: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- cost per active borrower: £29.71 (2)
- cost per hour: £39.92 (5)
- staff cost per hour: £29.69 (2)
- premises costs per hour: £34.46 (8)
- income per visit: £0.88 (1)

Take up of activities

- Visits per hour: 28.0 (4)
- Issues per hour: 31.2 (6)
- PC bookings per hour available: 76.0% (1)

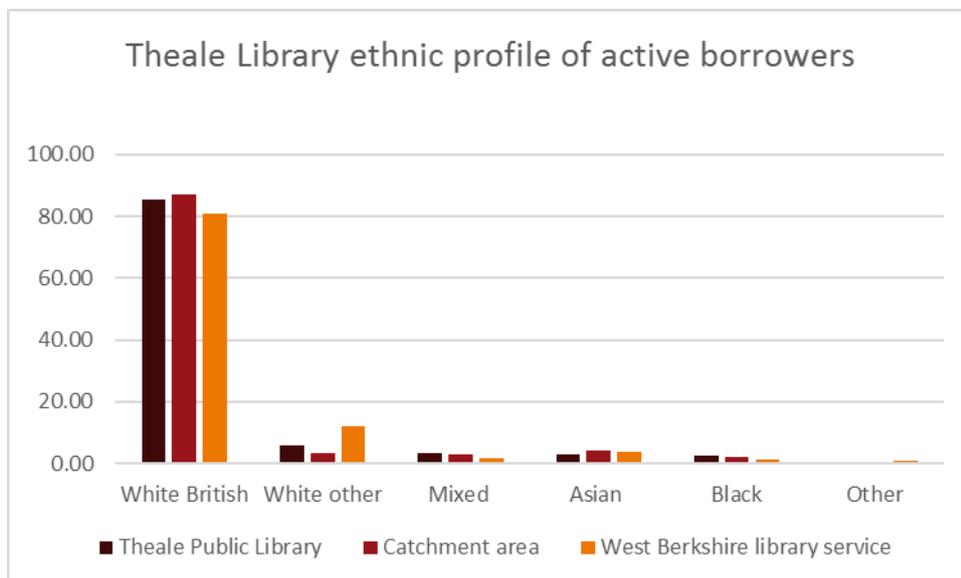
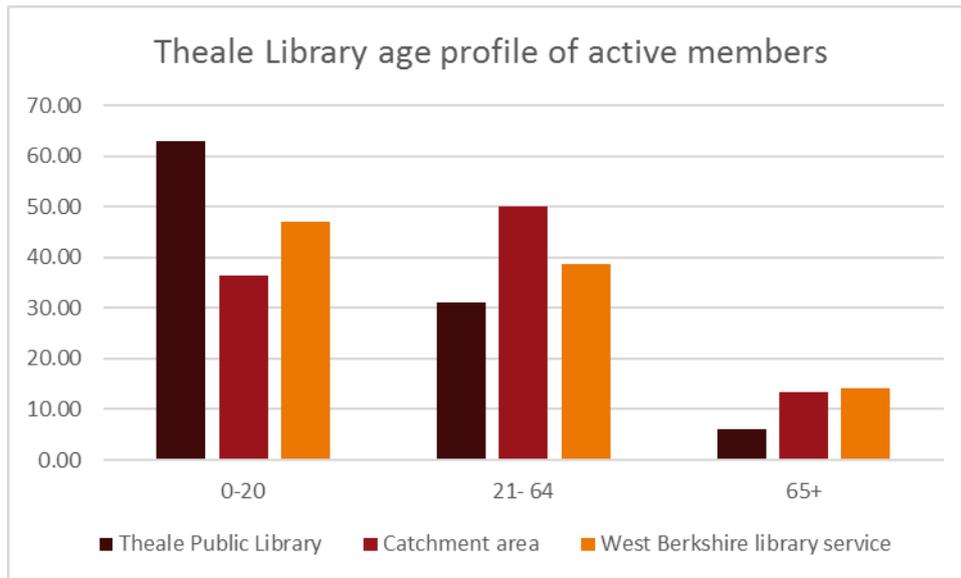
Wards included in catchment area

Birch Copse
Calcot

Theale
Westwood

³⁶ However, premises costs are increased by the provision of space for school use

Demographic comparisons



Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 78% (3)³⁷

³⁷ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall

- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 15% (8)
- residents with no qualifications: 19% (7)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 10% (6)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 12% (6)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 67% (3)³⁸

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 41.0% (5)
- distance to next nearest library: 4 miles (Burghfield Common) (59 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 12 miles (35 minutes by public transport)

Wash Common Library

Glendale Avenue
Newbury
West Berkshire
RG14 6TL

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries and exclude the At Home Service and mobile libraries, unless otherwise indicated

- hours open: 17 hours per week over 4 days. (7.4%)
- visits: 14,774 (3.7%)
- physical issues at branch: 17,034 (3.3% of entire service)
- issues including remote renewals: 22,288 (3.7%)
- active members: 567 (2.8%)
- of which males: 35.5%
- active members only using home branch: 46.3% (8)
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 87.8% (7)
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 68.1% (9)

deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

³⁸ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

- PC hours used: 298 (0.8%)
- Wi-Fi minutes used: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- issues per visit: 1.5
- visits associated with events: 601 (2.6%)

Trends

Wash Common opened part way through 2004/5. Since then stock issues remained fairly constant until 2013 but have declined since then. Issues for 2015/16 are 19.6% below that of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running library: £36,550

Of which

- staff: £31,650
- premises: £7,350
- income: £1,350
- staff cost per visit: £2.15 (8)

Cost per activity

Rank order of West Berkshire library branches in brackets where rank 1 is the most efficient and rank 10 the least

- cost per visit: £2.57 (9)
- cost per issue: £1.70 (7)
- PC hours used: £127.18 (9)
- Wi-Fi minutes: No Wi-Fi at this branch
- cost per active borrower: £66.84 (9)
- cost per hour: £44.59 (6)
- staff cost per hour: £37.24 (7)
- premises costs per hour: £8.65 (2)
- income per visit: £0.09 (9)

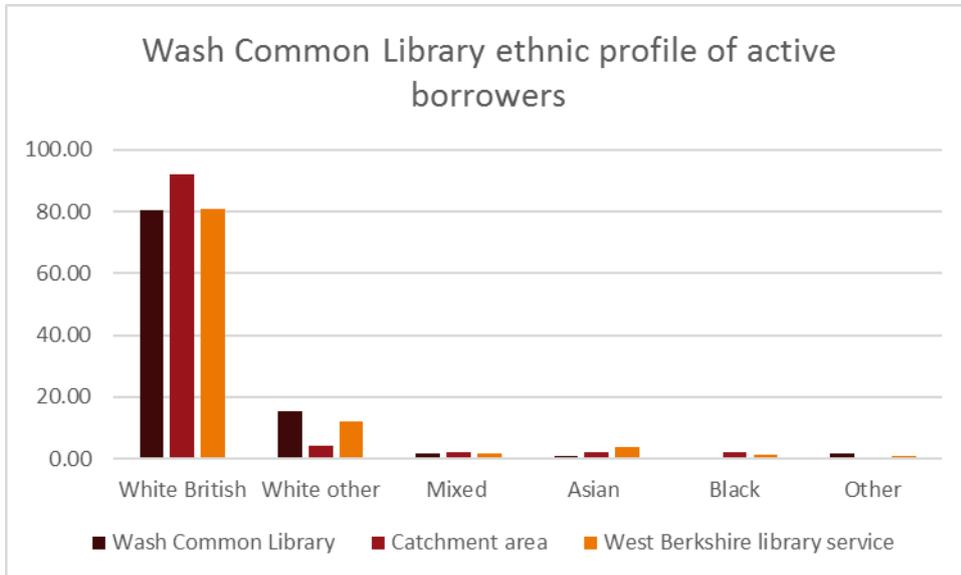
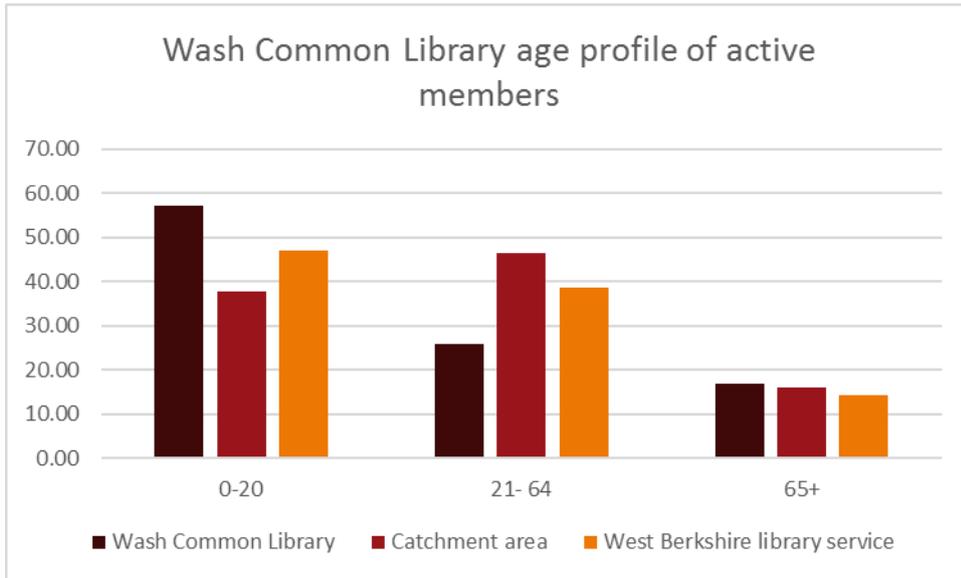
Take up of activities

- visits per hour: 17.4 (9)
- issues per hour: 26.2 (9)
- PC bookings per hour available: 44.8% (5)

Wards included in catchment area

There is no ward in which the majority of active library borrowers have Wash Common as their home branch. In Falkland ward 29.8% of active borrowers have Wash Common as a home branch compared with 68.1% for Newbury. In Greenham, the adjoining ward, 91.6% of active borrowers have Newbury as their home branch. This figure may be skewed if members joined at Newbury before Wash Common opened and they have subsequently transferred their use to Wash Common. However, the proportions of visits and issues of the library are broadly in line with the number of active borrowers at Wash Common suggesting that this is not a major influence. Nevertheless, the vast majority of active borrowers having Wash Common as a home branch live in Falkland ward and data for that ward has been used for demographic comparisons.

Demographic comparisons



Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. Rankings for each library catchment area are given in brackets where a library ranked 1 has the least deprived catchment area and that ranked 9 the most deprived.

- deprivation score for income: 85% (2)³⁹

³⁹ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The format that they are given in does not allow easy aggregation of data, but to produce an indication of the degree of deprivation in the catchment area for the library, an average percentile has been derived. This is an approximation to overall deprivation in the area rather than an exact figure. The higher the percentage given, the lower the level of deprivation in the area.

- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 13% (2)
- residents with no qualifications: 14% (2)
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 10% (7)
- households with no access to a vehicle: 10% (3)
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 65% (4)⁴⁰

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 60.0% (9)
- distance to next nearest library: 3 miles (Newbury) (18 minutes by public transport)
- distance to Newbury library: 3 miles (18 minutes by public transport)

⁴⁰ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations

Mobile Libraries

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for the whole of the West Berkshire libraries

- visits: 13,883 (3.3%)
- physical issues: 47,081 (8.9%)
- active members: 765 (2.8%)
- Of which males: 26.8%
- active members only using home branch: 67.3%
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 98.8%
- percentage of active borrowers living in ward in which library is located having branch as home library: 4.0%
- issues per visit: 4.4

Trends

Stock issues at mobile libraries varied between 2004 and 2011 although the overall trend was downwards. Since 2011/12 there has been a remarkable decline in issues. Issues for 2015/16 are 63.9% below those of 2004/5 and 22.2% below those of 2014/15.

Costs

Direct net cost of running two mobiles: £147,050

Of which:

- staff: £102,600
- vehicles: £44,000
- income: £0
- staff cost per visit: £7.42

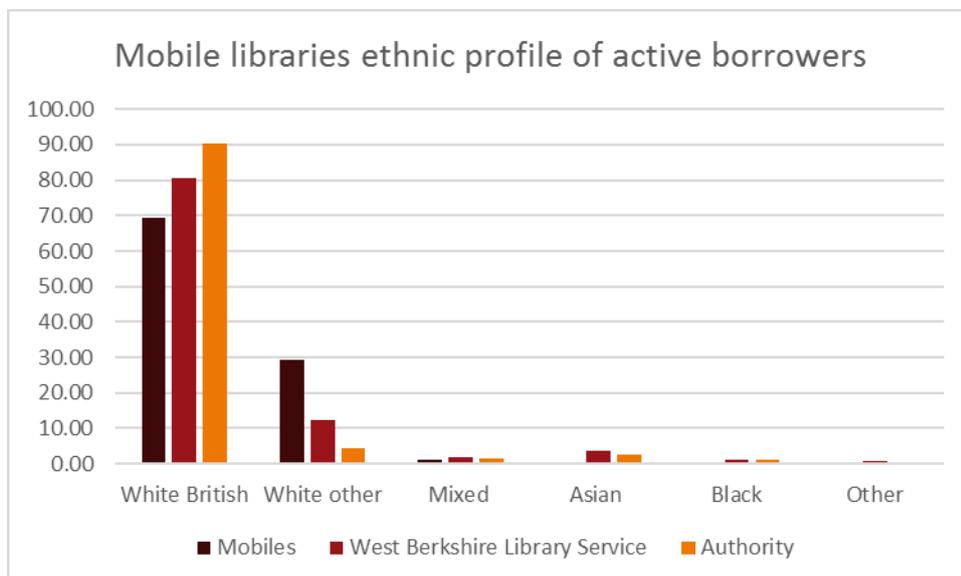
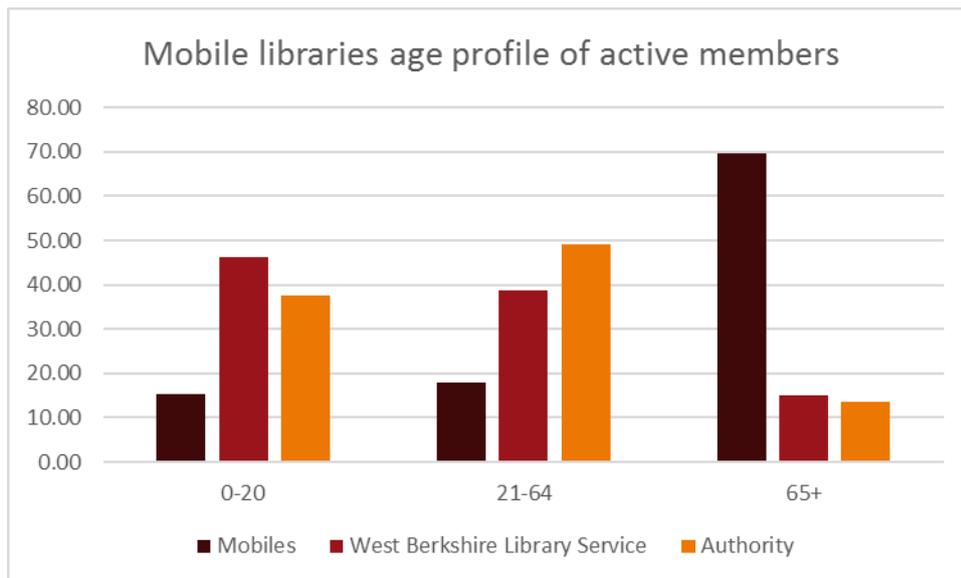
Cost per activity

- cost per visit: £10.63
- cost per issue: £2.44
- cost per active borrower: £192.22
- income per visit: £0.00

Wards included in catchment area

All wards

Demographic comparisons



Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. The catchment area for the mobile libraries is the entire authority of West Berkshire

- deprivation score for income: 87%⁴¹
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 14%
- residents with no qualifications: 17%

⁴¹ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. Unlike figures given for individual branches this figure is not taken from super output area statistics but for local authority statistics. For income deprivation West Berkshire is 284th out of 326 for districts in England where 1st is the most deprived.

- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 9%
- households with no access to a vehicle: 12%
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 44%⁴²

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 47.3%
- households with no access to a vehicle: 12%

⁴² This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations. For barriers to services and housing deprivation West Berkshire is 143rd out of 326 for districts in England where 1st would be the most deprived.

At Home Service

Performance 2015/16

Percentage figures show the proportion of the total for West Berkshire libraries

- visits: 1,117 (0.3%)
- physical issues: 12,275 (2.4%)
- active members: 130 (0.6%)
- of which males: 11%
- active members only using home branch: 40.0%⁴³
- percentage of active borrowers resident in West Berkshire: 99.2%
- issues per visit: 14.4

Trends

The At Home Service began in 2010/11 and since then issues have increased steadily. Issues for 2015/16 are 16.5% above those of 2014/15.

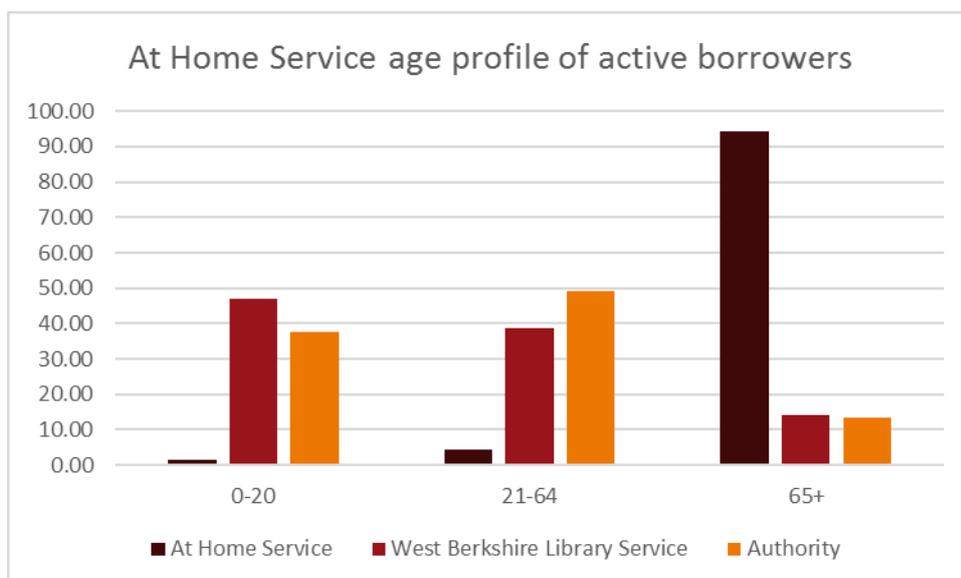
Costs

No costings have been provided for the At Home Service

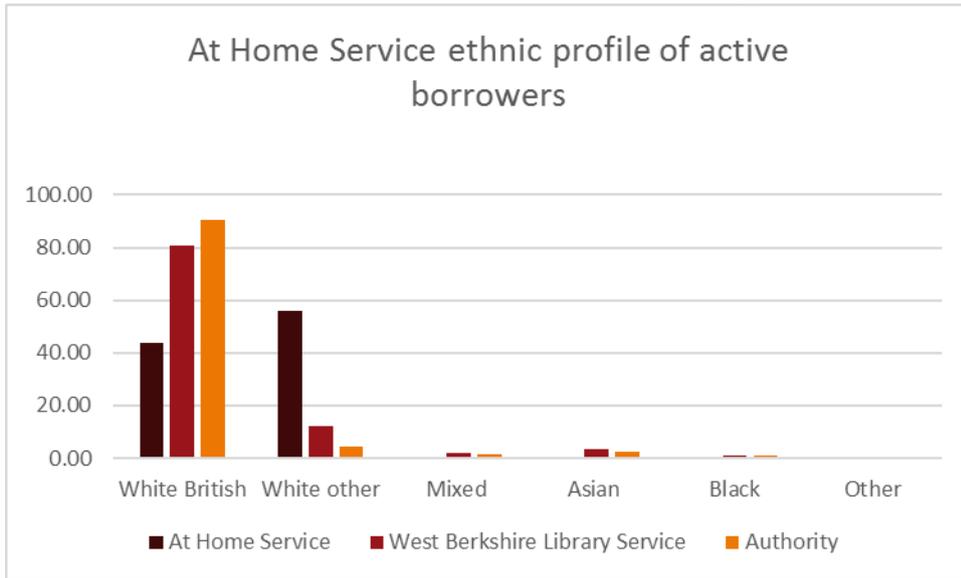
Wards included in catchment area

All wards

Demographic comparisons



⁴³ This is likely to be misleading as service users may have registered at a different branch before qualifying for At Home Service use



Indicators of deprivation for catchment area

Except where stated, this information is taken from the 2011 Census. The catchment area for the At Home service is the entire authority of West Berkshire

- deprivation score for income: 87%⁴⁴
- residents reporting poor or very poor health: 14%
- residents with no qualifications: 17%
- residents with unpaid caring responsibility: 9%
- households with no access to a vehicle: 12%
- deprivation score for barriers to services and housing: 44%⁴⁵

Analysis of transport and access to vehicles

- working residents travelling less than five miles to work: 47.3%

⁴⁴ The figure is based on the indices of deprivation published by ONS in 2013. Unlike figures given for individual branches this figure is not taken from super output area statistics but for local authority statistics. For income deprivation West Berkshire is 284th out of 326 for districts in England where 1st is be the most deprived.

⁴⁵ This measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services and is taken from the indices of multiple deprivation published by ONS in 2013. The same methodology has been used as for the income deprivations. For barriers to services and housing deprivation West Berkshire is 143rd out of 326 for districts in England where 1st would be the most deprived.

Appendix E: summary of key points raised by users

This summary is based on comments made at the drop-in sessions and in emails received from residents unable to attend these. Where a comment was made more than once (or a very similar one made), these are not repeated, and comments are not necessarily verbatim. Every community wanted to emphasise the importance of libraries for children and communities, as covered in sections one and two of this report.

Burghfield Common Library

Burghfield Common is spread out and has no real centre; therefore, there is no obvious good location for a library. The library is on a senior school site but is not a joint school library, and people felt that this could possibly be investigated. There is an unused room between the public library and the school library and better use could be made of this space. Residents felt they were closer to Reading if this library closed than to another West Berkshire Library. It is particularly difficult to walk to Mortimer even though it is close by as there are no pavements and it is an unlit, national speed limit road.

There is a supply of willing volunteers here through the volunteer bureau. Additionally, there is the possibility of moving the community café, which is currently run in the Methodist hall, but this would require installation of public toilets in the library. This does show evidence of a culture of volunteering in the area.

The community feel marginalised by the council; the bus service has already been taken away. It is a very strong community but with no organised group apart from that formed around the existing community café.

In discussing the hub and spoke model, the public proposed Theale as a hub and Mortimer and Burghfield Common as supported community libraries.

Specific points made:

- the library is the centre of the village community - a community hub especially for youngest and oldest
- meeting place in the community
- there is not much community space in Burghfield – one village hall
- no other communal area with internet access in Burghfield
- hub of information
- building is not used as much as it could be – events, activities, private hire – would be willing to pay
- library is at the front of the senior school grounds – middle of nowhere – difficult to find
- this library covers a large rural catchment area, serves outlying villages
- looks like an affluent area but has pockets of deprivation
- population is growing
- library is one room – no toilet facilities
- two members of staff + volunteers

- staff are 'exceptionally good'
- can't replace librarians' expertise: 'you can ask Google and you will get 1000 answers. You can ask a librarian and you will get the right answer'
- coffee machine in library
- a lot of use for children's activities, particularly Rhymetime during term time
- senior school in Burghfield and library important for homework
- safe space for children where they are known by the staff
- good non-fiction books for children researching for school work
- children use the library on their way home from school – both primary and senior
- community of young mums who walk to Rhymetime from school
- children come after school to study as it helps them to concentrate and prevent being distracted at home
- range of books for children is important
- book lists are given to children by school and parents order through library – would not mind paying for this service. Do the school and library communicate about this?
- physical books are important to mums for young children – school library is restricted
- story sessions and summer reading schemes invaluable when trying to instil a love of reading and books
- Children's Centre has closed
- this summer the school loses the education library service
- there are four supported living sites for the elderly close by
- pensioners will find travelling to another library difficult – they use IT facilities as they do not have these at home and need the staff support
- many people still do not have home computers or scanning or photocopying and the library provides for these needs
- ability to order a particular book from the central library is very useful
- book club book sets support Burghfield Book Club
- users would not go to Newbury but would go to Mortimer – if this library closed would probably use Reading which requires a car plus parking or a bus fare.
- could Mortimer cope with the numbers?
- could hours be extended in library which remains open if Mortimer and Burghfield merged?
- road to Mortimer is through the woods with no pavement, no lights and a national speed limit road – therefore impossible to walk
- advantage of merging libraries would be a larger stock
- what are the plans for a mobile library service in this area?
- willing to pay for services rather than lose the library
- could charge for reservation services

- could cost less if library opening times were co-ordinated so that libraries could share staff, e.g. in a group of 3 libraries only 2 of them are ever open at the same time so only staffing for 2 libraries would be required
- feel marginalised by the council – taken away bus services and now reduction in local facilities
- green aspect of encouraging people to walk to the library rather than getting alternative transport a further distance
- library card allows users to use the leisure centre in the school grounds as well
- there is a volunteer bureau in Burghfield
- WI is active – good source for volunteering

Hungerford Library

There is a very supportive friends' group operating at Hungerford Library. A unique resource is the 1:1 private room available for renting, currently used by registrars, who don't pay, and the town council, who do. The town council have an office in the same building and feel they will need more space in the future. They are willing to support financially and could take over the running of the building. The library is a good community space and has a garden.

There is support for volunteering but users emphasised that they felt this should be alongside existing staff.

A local group with learning disabilities visit regularly and there is a very active craft group.

Hungerford has been named a Rural Service Centre.

Wiltshire and Oxfordshire residents use the library (Wiltshire charge for reservations 85p). The police are moving into the fire station.

Specific points made:

- Hungerford library is only 10 years old
- the library is one big room
- the Town Hall is opposite
- Town Council moved into office at front of building – will need more space in future
- Rural Service Centre – key aspect – these have to have library, transport, secondary school etc.
- community hub
- social hub [said by almost everyone]
- large catchment area
- rental opportunities are not being maximised
- one small 1:1 private room charged at £15/hr during opening hours, £25/hr when closed – used for registrars (not charged) – very little rental, town council use and pay

- the main library room is available to hire out but not promoted and therefore not used much
- use of library important for rural community – support isolated people, ‘life-line’, ‘community hub’
- would ‘tear the heart out of the community’
- essential part of the fabric of the town
- don’t have community centre in Hungerford
- parking in Newbury is expensive, also need a car
- have travelled to Newbury by train, but the walk from the station to the library is very difficult if you have mobility problems
- West Berks have scrapped the use of the senior bus pass on the Chain bus and reduced the number of buses to and from Newbury and Hungerford
- in a time of cuts, libraries are especially important for everyone, and in particular for the young, the old and the vulnerable
- very sociable library
- lot of activities, good support for residents
- active book groups
- good children’s holiday events - holiday club, reading competition to see how many books can be read in holidays. Awarded with certificates
- help develop children’s reading, volume of books important
- nurseries and toddler storytelling to give beginning for their love of books
- school groups visit
- preschool children – rhymetime – pay for ticket for some events
- children learning to love books is important
- variety of books for children – need volume – schools do not provide this volume of reading
- safe environment for children – they can come in on their own
- complements the school library during school days and is vital for when students leave
- use of computers – don’t have computer at home. Job applications. Some families cannot afford technology – library only place for public computers.
- free tuition for IT available
- craft and chat group
- social – knitting, art etc. Big space
- launching gardening club as a result of popular demand
- adult learning resource for studying
- benefits and services for unemployed people
- CD collection in Newbury library – distributed across libraries
- staff important and point of contact. Trained staff are valuable. Reliable, regular volunteers are difficult to sustain. Red Cross shop struggles with volunteers

- knowledge of staff
- Home Library Service – volunteers get books from local library
- people would not object to paying for groups and events
- great space – good layout – light.
- scanning facility, free of charge, photocopying is charged
- information of local public events etc.
- garden
- good communication and support for young mums.
- used of online system, useful but need physical library as well
- don't want hours cut anymore
- complete support from town council who are already in the building. Willing to support financially and could look at taking over the building
- concerns that drop-in session wasn't comprehensive enough to allow everyone to provide feedback⁴⁶

Lambourn Library

Lambourn is a quieter library in general with a mixed race community and English conversation groups taking place. There was a general feeling that there is not much going on in the library. Residents said that Oxfordshire are losing their mobile library and therefore more people are coming to use the West Berkshire libraries.

Lambourn residents feel cut off and a lot is being taken away from them. There is no direct bus to Newbury and the cost of parking there is high.

There was less support for volunteering in Lambourn library. The parish council are supportive and committed but would want to see equity across all town and parish councils.

The local police office is closing, and it may be possible to move this into the library building.

Specific points made:

- Lambourn is a racing community and a multicultural area
- Lambourn very remote and those who don't drive or have internet, what would they do
- deprived, cut off, ageing population
- the library is part of the community, social aspect very important
- important when becoming part of the community as a newcomer – joining groups.
- integration of ethnic minorities
- other local venues are the leisure centre, community centre, school – library is important as a family space
- local police office is closing completely – could they have an office in the library?

⁴⁶ Although not publicised as such, many people wrongly considered these informal sessions to constitute public consultation, which was not the intention behind them. As stressed elsewhere in this report, full public consultation should be part of the decision-making process that will follow this needs assessment

- closed visitor centre in Newbury – could that be in the library
- needs to be more going on here to make it more vibrant
- could involve the church e.g. story telling
- only one coffee shop in Lambourn – therefore a coffee machine would be a good idea
- staff not so proactive
- volunteers help with children’s activities
- have summer holiday activities
- children’s activities important
- school visits once a month
- primary school up the road and parents don’t bring their children here.
- music session
- link with nursery
- photocopying and printing useful
- active knit and natter and art group
- volume of books being read means need a library
- computer use – as well as help with computers
- parish council office only open in mornings so library is a point of information
- staff are very helpful with computer skills
- opening hours good
- online service important to order books and can then be picked up
- ancestry.com
- two open access computers at Lambourn centre but not supported – no staff help
- book café would be good
- more paid events
- how about local groups offering taster sessions in the library on their group?
- could trainers (there are over 40 in Lambourn) offer prizes, such as tours of their stables?
- self-serve electronic system would increase access and save money
- could library take 2nd hand books instead of them going to charity shops
- not in favour of using volunteers
- cost of parking at Newbury is high and also no buses

Mortimer Library

Mortimer is a small library near the church and two primary schools. The parish council office is at the back of the building and rent is paid, but they feel this space is too small and would be put to better use as a café/family room. This space is a conservatory and leads out to the garden.

The library land has a covenant on it from the 1970s stating ‘library use only’. More could be made of the library if it were community run. The parish council is very happy to support it

financially. They envisage a community hub with central support for books and professional advice. The police station has closed and is running from a mobile unit in the pub car park, but could be better in the library. The post office is moving and the bank may also be at risk.

Mortimer is a Rural Service Centre. Development of 120 houses is planned in the local area for the near future.

Specific points made:

- land – covenant in 1970s – donated by Mortimer specifically for library use
- small car park
- parish council use – committee meetings, surgeries and office – 5 wards in the parish. Parish willing to get involved.
- parish office out the back – pay rent, some locals not keen on parish council involvement.
- building recently refurbished
- opening hours have been reduced
- library should be more of a communication hub
- Rural Service Centre – library is designated service hub
- growing village (building plan 120 houses)
- changes in bus service
- for some vulnerable members of community may be only regular outing and contact they have with others
- mums can walk to rhymetime – life saver for new mums as they can integrate into the community (note closure of children’s centres)
- dads come in Saturday am – importance of range of physical books for children and accessibility
- infants and juniors can walk here
- are there book boxes at primary schools? Deprived area, can’t afford books
- early intervention e.g. baby massage, speech and language etc
- three public computers, IT training,
- ancestry subscription which can be used by residents
- DVDs could go? Although children still use them
- ‘Bookaholics’ – 8 member book club.
- book group – could be charged for books
- events – could use library for more events and charge £3 or £4 per event
- could be rented out more for meetings, hire for children’s events, groups could rent space, yoga – use would depend on competitive rate per hour village hall is £25/session (half day)
- fundraising within the village is a possibility
- staffing – could run with one member of staff and volunteers. Staff highly praised.
- fees and charges are low – could pay for reservations and also online service

- renewing online is easy
- interest in buying an annual library ticket⁴⁷
- charge for inter-library loans
- games café may be a good idea
- mobile library visits close by in warden housing
- Mortimer book group – meet in library, staff advise on books, provide sets. Important for community, meet during the day, order books in, get books from library but meet elsewhere, would not mind being charged for books – charged £15/year and each get 10 sets of books.
- community run library could extended opening hours
- instead of looking to close all important rural resources, should be further developed not just for use as a library but also as a valuable community asset
- no toilet in library – local café has one
- council could use library more in rural areas e.g. ‘we don’t buy at this door’ stickers only available in council offices in Newbury.
- could use for 1:1’s e.g. job seekers
- book shelves on coasters so can be wheeled away
- more use could be made of rotating stock
- Mortimer is a strong existing community ‘community conversations’
- ‘village partnership’ run fun day, Facebook page, good source of volunteers
- regular drop in sessions run by the Village Agents, information stalls from Age UK Berkshire, Alzheimers Society, Stroke Association etc. would be really useful
- worth speaking to Empowering West Berkshire⁴⁸ to see if they can help organise programmes for West Berkshire libraries

Newbury Library

Response at Newbury to the drop-in was low (and no emails were received specifically about this library); this may be because the library is not viewed as under threat. From observation, the staff levels are high and better use could be made of self-service facilities. The library is a busy, excellent space. Regular events take place and space is hired out. Space could be found for a café.

Specific points made (some taken from comment board):

- ‘would be happy to pay £50/year for membership if libraries can be kept open, think a café would be a good idea’
- important to prevent social isolation
- use could be made of more volunteers

⁴⁷ NB not permitted under legislation

⁴⁸ <http://www.empoweringwb.org.uk/> - ‘promote any charitable purpose for the benefit of the public, principally but not exclusively in the local government area of West Berkshire and its area of benefit and, in particular, build the capacity of third sector organisations and provide them with the necessary support, information and services to enable them to pursue or contribute to any charitable purpose’

- staff very helpful
- would be willing to pay for services

Pangbourne Library:

Pangbourne is a small town library just along from the central shops in one room. It has a very well organised friends' group who are ready to form charitable status and take over the running of the library. At the AGM of the parish council, they voted for the library to be their number one priority financially.

Pangbourne is a Rural Service Centre. The Children's Centre has closed therefore there may be colocation potential. The community feel they could make better use of the space for example in the evenings. A Sulham parish councillor said 'What do we get from our council tax, closing the library is a step too far'.

Specific points made:

- only other place to get involved in Pangbourne is the church
- central in town and therefore the community – important information point
- part of community – social meeting point, cultural information centre
- neutral space for socialising
- nothing else in Pangbourne (apart from church)
- quite a Christian based community so a lot happens around the church
- lower socio-economic groups feel less included
- public transport is low
- nearer to Reading than Newbury – no bus route to Newbury
- Rural Service Centre plus further 35 houses
- a lot of businesses in Pangbourne
- residents pay the same rates as Newbury but for many fewer services
- no other facilities in Pangbourne – only community space
- 'isolated' rural community – resource for disadvantaged people
- the chair of governors at Pangbourne primary highlighted importance of libraries for children
- school bring groups of children down as they can walk there
- story time – social side for parents, good for children pre-primary
- Summer Reading Challenge – 2 volunteers
- internet access (if community-run would West Berks Council still provide IT?) and also printing facility – only access
- learn to use IT and use to look for jobs
- use E-library, E-book service is limited in choice
- people prefer physical books and not all have a kindle/e-reader
- groups include craft
- book clubs
- children losing research skills i.e. Google makes it too easy

- young mums – Newbury is too far, social aspect, reading challenge, not all young
- mums drive, don't have internet
- craft club use: no access to another library, no public transport
- craft club – active volunteers who run Christmas activities etc.
- FOPL (friends of Pangbourne Library) are aiming to achieve charitable status in order to be able to run the library if needed. Could take role of running and providing volunteers, open more hours, community use, renting space etc. (key holding details may be an issue)
- parish AGM – number one priority to maintain library. Want to know financial implications – can put money in to help service
- questions around precept if parish council support financially
- willing volunteers – already a very active volunteer community in Pangbourne e.g. church, community centre
- good staff
- Children's Centre has closed – building co location? – Play group use library now, toy library?
- 'magic of books'
- hours need to be kept
- library always involved in village events
- digital resources in Newbury library and access via tablets – available in community libraries

Thatcham Library

Thatcham Library is not in the centre of town, but near the dentist, doctors and a parade of shops; however, it is still difficult to find and has poor signage. Thatcham's population is as big as Newbury and growing. There is free parking for one hour in Thatcham near the library. Residents are supportive of the use of volunteers but only alongside permanent staff. The library is surrounded by sheltered housing. There is support from the town council to contribute to running costs⁴⁹.

Specific points made:

- there are three members of staff
- building costs are higher than most community libraries
- pockets of deprivation
- Newbury 3 or 4 miles away – there is a bus service
- keep satellites and close Newbury. Newbury would be overloaded if all had to go there
- wouldn't go to Newbury - pay for parking in Newbury – or bus fee including children, whereas free parking at Thatcham

⁴⁹ Thatcham Town Council made available a survey they ran to obtain residents' views on Thatcham Library, but as this was not a consultation exercise its findings were not factored into this report

- not only about books – advice on local services, pastoral care
- no bookshop in Thatcham
- Home Start volunteer – brings children to story time
- lots of young mums as well as older population
- physical books are important
- want their children to be able to walk into a library
- Rhymetime is important
- 3 schools and pre-schools within walking distance
- children’s study areas – do not have facilities at home, would like access to IT
- facilities at extender hours e.g. later after school activities and weekends
- computer classes – IT very well used
- if charge for computers, could they be free for students?
- consider charging for computer use and running an Internet Cafe style of operation alongside the lending library
- online system with order and collect a very good service
- familiar place for older population – socialisation
- reading group use library books and use the library space when it is closed but do not pay – would be willing to. Would not travel into Newbury
- Job Seekers use internet and staff support
- next to library and day centre there is sheltered accommodation which will grow – population of Thatcham is growing
- committee meetings held in library – Thatcham historical society
- would not object to paying a token membership fee e.g. £12/month⁵⁰
- not interested in total volunteer run library
- staff are excellent and essential in library– volunteer assistance at peak times but not to replace the permanent staff – would be plenty of volunteers in the area, but would it be sustainable
- look at Saturday afternoon opening hours perhaps with young volunteers
- U3A could use library for space, especially in evenings, but they don’t currently
- photocopying and scanning facilities
- IT support volunteers, help residents with home laptops also
- stock could be reduced
- book drop for when library is not open would be very useful
- workshops in library – charge for some (£3-£4)
- a lot of support from town council and would be willing to input costs
- if libraries have to close their books should be added to the Newbury stock to provide an extensive mobile service throughout West Berkshire

⁵⁰ NB not permitted under legislation

Theale Library

Theale Library is a joint school/public library situated at the entrance of the senior school. Attached is an extension of considerable size (2 classrooms, a dance studio and a kitchen and toilets). This is currently managed by the school and full rental potential is not being realised.

The parish council are supportive, including potentially contributing to funding. There is a supportive friend's group, which includes some members from the parish council.

The community would like a café and there is space for this. There is a trust who run the village hall and there may be opportunities for working together.

There is no bank in the village therefore possible partnerships with bank for rural community may be an idea across all libraries.

Currently there is a disproportionately high cost of running this library.

Many more activities could be run in the library, especially if more community run with more involvement. They could rent rooms for children's parties and other events. Support locally for more volunteers. The council service centre in Calcot closed, therefore people could access more council services through the library. The parish council would also be interested in renting space; they do not have a lot of money but perhaps surrounding parishes could contribute.

Specific points made:

- Theale has two schools, some pupils use libraries to gather information and use its computers for homework
- long way to go to Newbury wouldn't drive - no easy transport to get to other libraries. If had to travel would be an unusual treat
- growing population in Theale
- plans for around 1,000⁵¹ new homes to be built
- area has a lot of small businesses
- council service at Sainsburys closed
- first point of community, community hub, not much on at village hall, more community activities could be run in library
- acts as an information centre in the village, community based
- residents can walk here – children can come in on their own as they are local,
- would not be able to travel to Reading or Newbury
- buses to Thatcham and Newbury are time-consuming and therefore not practical for school students and working people
- promotes good mental health
- nowhere else to go in Theale – otherwise would be stuck in front of TV

⁵¹ Actually more like 425 and by no means certain: currently an application being considered for 325 houses for Lakeside, and the site regarding 100 houses opposite the Green is a proposed site

- good transport links and parking
- the Children's Centre in Calcot has closed – mums use library to meet other mums, children's activities
- good location between the primary and secondary schools, visit after school
- library allows interaction between young families, support network, building relationships
- school research for older children
- Summer Reading Challenge, crafts,
- kids learn to read in library – seen progress because of variety of books
- regular rhyme time
- not a lot for young children in village
- a lot of young families – social place
- distance to go elsewhere with young children – they wouldn't go
- community aspect of libraries especially important for new mothers and their children
- children's activities with certificates/badges
- library improving SATs results as volume of books read – avid readers
- primary school teacher – borrows books for school
- older people – reading, reference, some older people don't have computers at home
- elderly - lots in Theale, Large print books, internet, maybe the only person to talk to them each day, branch (almost) of social services
- for many older people libraries are a lifeline, especially for those who live alone or for those who are trying to learn about using the Internet
- importance of accessing government and public services online
- distance learning – advanced student
- ADHA & Dyslexia – lib do get special resources and audio CD's. Friendly, comfortable environment
- good customer service
- particularly good staff member, for children's activities.
- staff member was mentioned by everyone – obviously good with the children
- value of staff members who know their customers, their families, their book choices and their interests
- could charge for service: Rhymetime, book time, internet usage
- reduce hours
- library itself could be smaller, community hub use
- ideas – internet café, gardening club
- joint council e.g. benefits surgery
- 'poor people can learn'

- would use a café after Rhymetime – only one in village, not much space for buggies and other end of high street (how busy is rhyme time?)
- could do more activities e.g. knitting, possibly lunch club
- could charge for Rhymetime, say £1 per child
- could rent rooms for children’s parties and other activities – nicer quality than village hall
- staff could organise other people to come in and run activities
- historian research – would have to go to Newbury
- to use online banking – no bank in village
- would be willing to pay more council tax and keep library e.g. £10/month
- possibility of toy library
- volunteers for home library service: Feel there would be support for volunteers, library is well used – free parking, good space, population growing, importance of home lib service
- partnership with NHS for community space
- would seem nothing less than good management to look at ways to keep the library's contents in a less expensive building, either by selling off the part which is doesn't use or by selling the whole building and moving into smaller premises
- Parish Council doesn’t have a lot of money but other surrounding councils could contribute – also could apply for grants e.g. skate park – proactive keen
- libraries possibly ‘over-stocked’ – e-books?
- why was go ahead given to spend a large amount of money on the refurbishment of Newbury Museum, when council would have known it was highly likely they would have to make cuts on facilities of the smaller villages?

Wash Common Library

Wash Common Library is in the middle of a housing estate three miles outside Newbury. There is a pre-school next door during the week.

The greatest emphasis placed by users was on the importance of local, being able to walk there especially with children and for the elderly. The library has a small, free car park and some visitors drive to the library. The high cost of parking or taking the bus to Newbury, as well as the time taken, is an off-putting factor (especially for the elderly). Smaller community libraries are thought to be better for children. Its proximity to five local schools is considered important.

The local councillor was supportive of using more volunteers. There is a lot of supported housing close by, and a proposed new development nearby⁵².

If closed, consider using the mobile library or At Home service for residents of the sheltered housing.

⁵² Note, not for at least ten years

Specific points made:

- expanding residential area some distance from the town centre – with another 2000 dwellings planned to be built in the years ahead⁵³
- more building going on in the area
- free parking
- library service is the only council provision and point of council contact / information to the south of Newbury
- community hub – steady, busy flow
- it is a purpose built library owned by WBC
- also serves north Hampshire
- smaller libraries are friendly
- more difficult to get into Newbury
- difficult for young mums to go into Newbury
- access to books for children
- primary school in area, all use the library. Summer reading challenge
- lots of people walk to library – with young children.
- infant school use library and toddler group
- family use
- used to be ballet classes next door at the community centre on Saturday and had a lot of children from that but that has stopped
- order online and pick up. Don't want to pay to park at Newbury. Information as bus service is difficult as all different providers
- assisted housing down the road
- a lot of elderly in area because of sheltered housing
- elderly find it difficult to get into town
- elderly people use regularly as a social point
- use of internet connection
- local information available
- staff unfailingly helpful and friendly and provide a much more personal level of service and response than the busy and pressured staff in the central library
- could get local volunteers
- change of route for mobile library?

⁵³ But not for at least ten years, and not certain to happen