

Libraries Consultation Plan

Background

The council has to find £40 million worth of savings from its annual budget over the next few years, in addition to the £32 million which it has already saved through restructuring and efficiency savings. These savings are being managed through the 'Sutton's Future' programme.

On 15 January, the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee considered and endorsed the 'Library Strategy for Sutton 2015 to 2019'. The Library Strategy has the key aims of:

- Literacy: growing the readers of the future
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Narrowing the digital divide
- Creating a viable, sustainable and quality service within available resources.

From December 2014 to February 2015, the council ran a library user survey to gather information about which libraries people were using, which library services were being used, and what people felt were important issues for the future.

The survey indicated that 40% of people had Sutton Central as their main library and half of those people whose main library was one of the branches also used Sutton Central for some of the time. Comments made as part of the survey suggested that, in general, users are very positive about the service which is being provided. This reinforces the results of the Residents' Survey carried out in October 2013, in which 89% of library users said that they were satisfied with the service.

Aim of the Consultation

The consultation will help to inform the decisions on the future of Sutton's libraries by providing qualitative and quantitative information about residents' views on the proposals.

Methodology

It is recommended that there are five strands to the consultation exercise:

- An open public meeting to discuss the proposals
- A meeting with invited partners
- An online survey (with the option for people without internet access to complete a hard copy)
- A telephone survey
- Specific engagement with young people

Set out below are further details of each of those areas.

In addition to these exercises, there would be a separate mechanism for staff from the library service to make their views known e.g. by sending comments to a dedicated email address.

1 Open meeting

We could hold an open meeting which members of the public (including non-library users) could attend to hear about and discuss the proposals.

The event could be held at Sutton Central Library in the Europa Gallery as this is a convenient location for people to get to.

The event could be advertised through:

- posters at the local branches,
- the Sutton's Future website,
- social media,
- emails to library users,
- contact with stakeholder groups e.g. Friends groups, reading groups, etc.
- a press release announcing the consultation.

Structure of the meeting

The meeting could follow the following format:

- Introduction by senior manager from the libraries service outlining the background to the consultation and the proposals.
- Background and context statement from the lead member
- Open questions from the floor.

2 Online Survey

An online survey is economical to run and analyse and can gather the views of a large number of people (for example, 1,800 people responded to the library user survey). Conducting such a survey would be in line with the approach used for the 'green garden waste', 'theatres' and 'children's centres' consultations.

While the survey would be open to all residents to answer, it is not likely to be answered by a representative sample of Sutton's population. There will be a self-selection bias towards people who are library users and, based on the results from the library user survey, those people will tend to be female and have an older age profile than the borough as a whole.

The online survey could be advertised by sending links to:

- Sutton's online panel
- Library users through the library notice facility (there are 20,500 email addresses recorded)
- Library stakeholder groups (see Annex B)

As with the open meeting, it could also be advertised through the Sutton's Future website, a press release and social media.

For those people who do not have internet access, a paper version of the online survey would be made available through the contact centre, and at libraries, museums, leisure centres and other council buildings.

Consultation best practice means that the survey cannot only ask for views about saving money through making changes to library services. It will need to include questions around other options which the Council might use to plug the funding gap e.g. by making cuts elsewhere or through increasing Council Tax (although it can be stated why these options are not viable for Sutton Council).

3 Telephone survey

A telephone survey was carried out as part of the Sutton's Future consultations on 'green garden waste' and 'theatres'. The telephone survey itself would be carried

out by a third party organisation and, if 1,000 people were interviewed, would cost around £10,000. To minimise the costs, the development of the survey and analysis of the results could be done in-house.

The main benefit of conducting a telephone survey in addition to the online survey is that the questions could be addressed to a representative (by age, gender, ethnicity and working status) sample of Sutton's population. It would include people who do not use the library (who in the Residents' Survey of October 2013 made up 41% of the respondents). The results of this survey would not therefore have the bias towards library users that the online survey is likely to have.

4 Engagement with young people (16-25)

There are several groups of young people involved with the library service who would be included within the stakeholder groups, and therefore encouraged to take part in the online survey. However, the respondents to the Library User Survey were under-representative of young people and it is likely that there would be a similar low response rate to the open meeting and online survey from that demographic. If we are to properly gauge the views of young people, we would therefore need to take some additional steps to ensure their participation.

These options might include:

- Present the initiative to the Sutton Youth Parliament to get their views and buy-in. The Youth Parliament could decide on the most appropriate way to consult their peers, but we might support and allow the group to put individual focus groups together (4-6 young people per group) and empower them to deliver a 30 minute consultation

Incentives for taking part (e.g. vouchers) would greatly increase the response rate.

- Text consultation: this could be done alongside the telephone survey (preferably by the same company) and would be likely to have a higher response rate. Texting 5 – 8 key questions to be answered with a 1-5 rating would be a quick and efficient way to consult a large group of young people. The main difficulty would be in getting access to phone numbers of sufficient young people within Sutton. When the telephone survey is commissioned we will ask the company to provide quotes for this exercise too.

Timetable

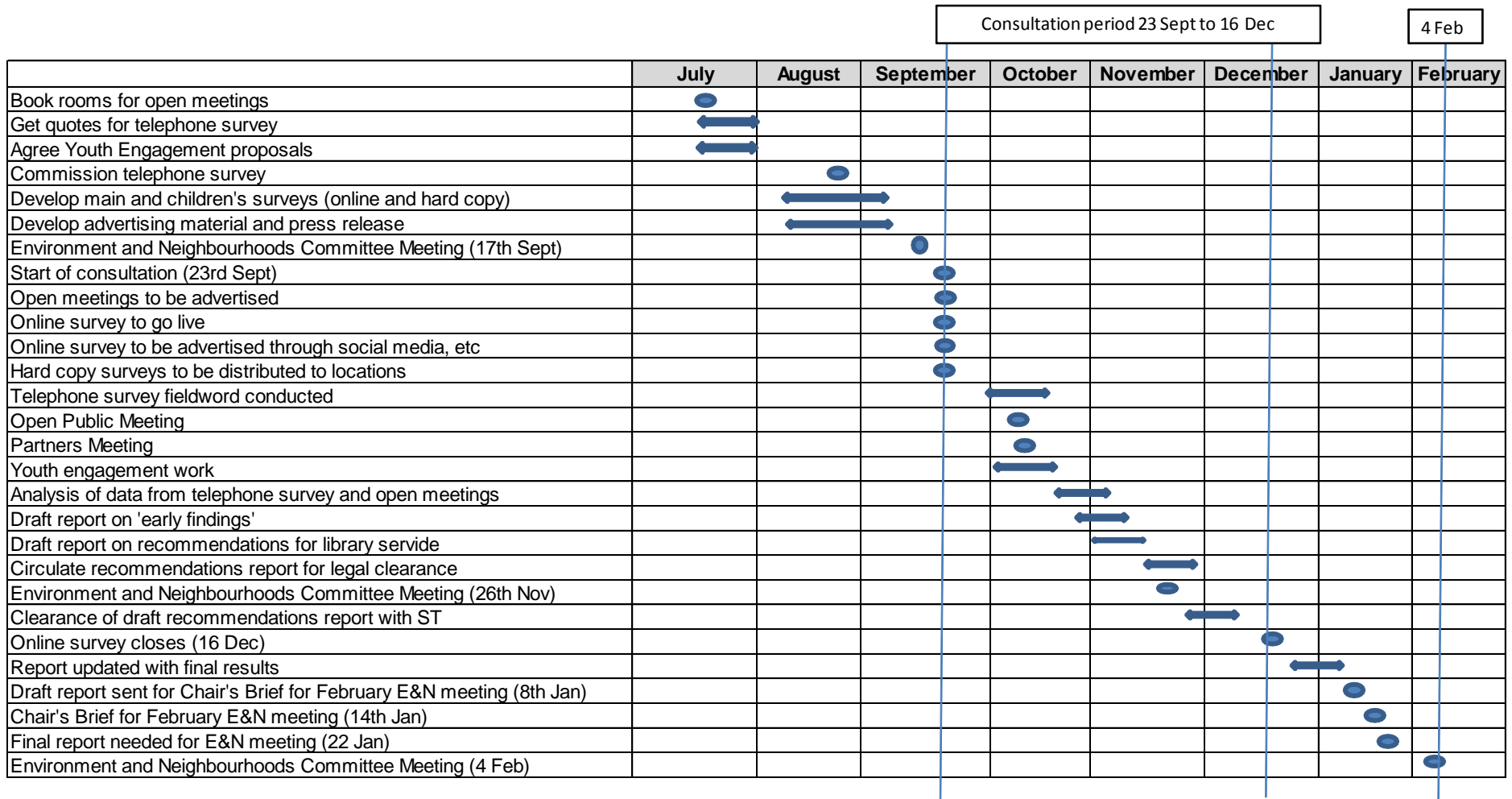
There is no legally prescribed period for a consultation of this nature, but good practice (and the need to avoid possible challenge) suggests that a period of 8 to 12 weeks would be appropriate.

If decisions were taken on the options on which to consult at the Environment and Neighbourhoods Committee meeting on 17 September then, allowing for the 'call-in' period, the consultation could start on Wednesday 23 September. 12 weeks from that date would give an end-date for the consultation of 16 December.

The chart below shows the main dates and when the various consultation activities would take place. The community engagement work – the public and partners' meeting, the youth engagement and the telephone survey – would take place early

in the consultation period. This will mean that the results from those activities can be analysed and written up early in the process. That data could then be combined with the early results from the online survey in a draft report which could be circulated for relevant clearances by mid to late November. The report could then be updated with final online survey results towards the end of December so that a semi-final draft can be prepared for the Chair's Briefing meeting in the second week of January.

Libraries Consultation timetable



Resources Needed

The table below summarises the main tasks required for each of the recommended options and when those tasks would take place. Resources would need to be made available from the Communications Team, library service, the Commissioning and Governance team and the Youth Engagement Team.

Team	Main Tasks	When
Comms Team	Develop advertising material and press release. Advertise the consultation e.g. website, social media, email distributions	Need to have all this in place by 23 rd September.
Commissioning and Business Insight Team	Public meetings – logistics	By September
	Public meetings – facilitation and note taking	Early October
	Development of online survey(s)	By 23 rd September
	Production of paper version of survey(s)	By 23 rd September
	Commissioning of Telephone Survey	By end of September
	Analysis and report writing	October to December
Libraries Staff	Development of online survey(s)	By 23 rd September
	Send out emails to library users with link to online survey	By end of September
	Distribute paper versions of the survey.	October to December
	Public meetings – facilitation and note taking	Early October
	Development of conclusions from the consultation	November - December
Youth Service	Assist with the Youth engagement activities	Early October

Annex A: Library addresses and locations

Library	Address
Sutton Central Library	St Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1EA
Beddington Library	The Broadway, Beddington, CR0 4QR
Cheam Library	Church Road, Cheam, SM3 8QH
Library@Life Centre	Sutton Life Centre, Alcorn Road, Sutton, SM3 9PX
Library@Phoenix Centre	Mollinson Drive, Roundshaw, Wallington, SM6 9NZ
Library@Westcroft Centre	Westcroft Leisure Centre, Westcroft Road, Carshalton, SM5 2TG
Circle Library	Green Wrythe Lane, Carshalton, SM5 1JJ
Wallington Library	Shotfield, Wallington, SM6 0HY
Worcester Park Library	Stone Place, Windsor Road, Worcester Park, KT4 8ES



