

Archive Search Room Opening Hours - give us your views

Between February 5 and March 12 2018, we are seeking your views on our proposed changes to the archive search room opening hours.

Our proposal

The search room at the Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone is currently open to the public during the following times:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday (9am-6pm)
Thursday (9am-8pm)
Saturday (9am-5pm)

We are proposing to change the public opening times to the following:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (9am-5pm)
Thursday (9am-5pm)
Saturday (9am-5pm)

The search room would be closed to the public on Fridays, with a small reduction in opening times across the rest of the working week. This is a reduction from 55 hours per week to 40.

The proposed changes only affect the archive search room. The opening hours of Kent History and Library Centre are unchanged and all other archive services will be fully available by phone or email on the closed day.

Kent County Council needs to keep all its services and its opening hours under review to ensure we are using our resources effectively. We have looked closely at the daily usage of the search room and identified times when the search room is less busy or underused. We are proposing closing on one of the least popular days. By closing the Archive search room at times when it is quieter we can make more efficient use of our staff resources.

We have also looked at the availability of other Archive Services across the county and beyond to benchmark Kent's opening times and avoid being closed at the same time as other nearby archives. During the times when the room is closed to the public, our staff will still be available to help with research, digital ordering, and enquiries by phone or email.

The council needs to make significant financial savings. This proposal is estimated to save KCC Libraries, Registration and Archives £10,000 a year on staffing costs. We have been holding vacancies in the team to cover this potential.

We have also undertaken a full Equality Impact Assessment to look at how the proposals might affect people with specific characteristics (this includes age, disability, gender, and so on.) The EqlA is available on our website or on request. We want to hear any comments on the assumptions that we have made. You can find contact details at the end of this document.

Why we are proposing this

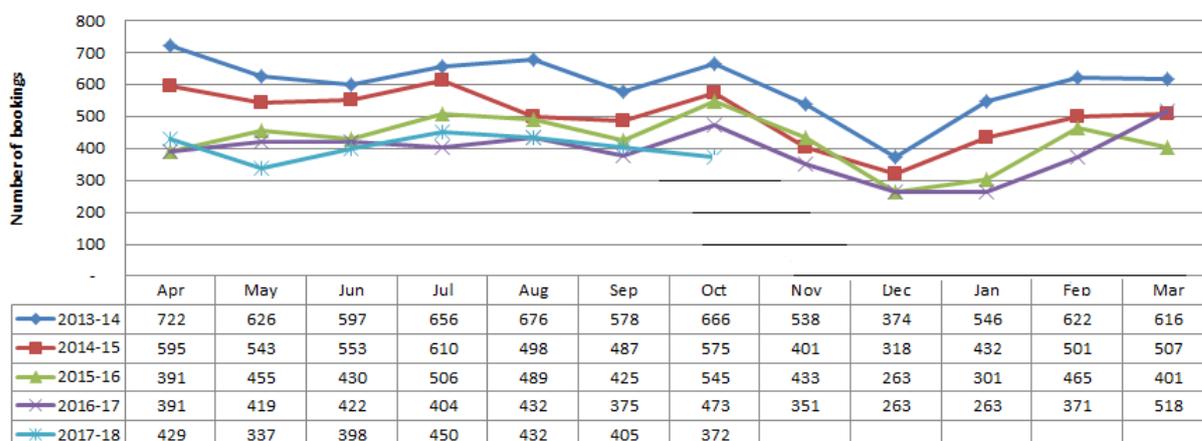
Usage statistics have highlighted that the search room is quiet at certain times and days of the week (table 2 below highlights the times when the room is underused). We therefore need to make the most of our staff time and use of the search room. The Archive Service could use the proposed closed day to work in that space on our historic collections, hosting daytime talks and events, including school visits.

This year we are also progressing our plans for digitisation of the archives (documents and materials being available to view on our website). Our expectation is that more people will be able to access our collections online in future either at home or in Kent Libraries.

The tables below show some of the evidence used to inform the proposal:

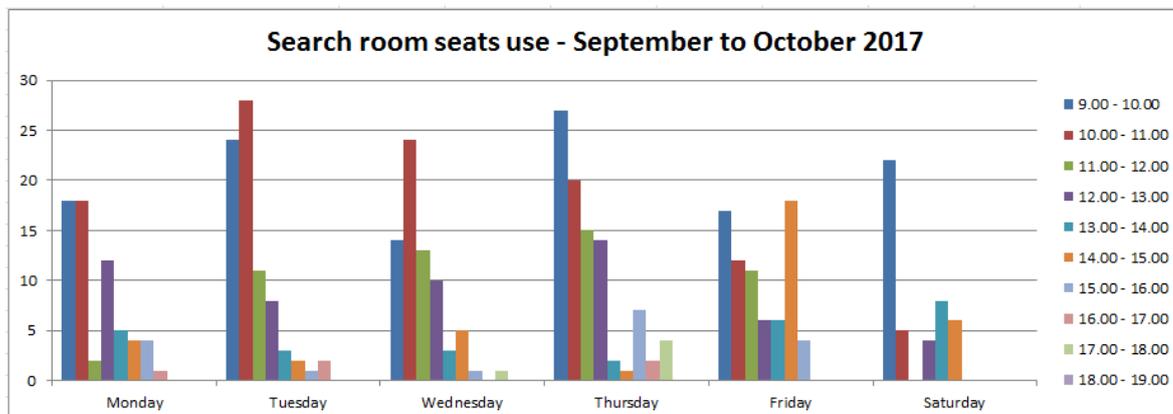
Table 1:

Archive equipment bookings - includes seats, PCs, microfilm reader and scanner 2013-14 to Oct 2017



The table above highlights the decline that has been seen year on year on the public use of the archive search room facilities.

Table 2:



The graph above highlights that there is good use throughout most of the day including when the centre opens at 9 but that this declines particularly after 5 and that there is a distinct variation in usage across the weekdays with Mondays and Fridays showing the lowest levels of use.

Our new opening hours will still mean we are open for longer than many other Archive Services and we have avoided closing on Mondays as we have recognised that is the day when many other archive services are closed:

Archive Office	Closure day	Opening hours
Medway Archive and Local History Centre	Wednesday	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9am - 5pm Saturday: 9am-4pm
Canterbury Cathedral Archives	Monday Friday	Tuesday – Thursday: 9.15am to 16.45pm Saturdays – 1st Saturday of every month: 9.15am – 12.45pm
Essex Archive Office	Every Monday, Friday and Saturday (except for once a month)	Tuesday – Thursday 10am – 5pm One week in every month Tuesday 10am – 8pm Friday 9am – 4pm One Saturday a month 9am – 4pm
Surrey History Centre	Monday	Tuesday - 9.30am to 5pm Wednesday - 10.15am to 5pm Thursday - 9.30am to 5pm Friday - 9.30am to 5pm Saturday - 9.30am to 4pm
East Sussex The Keep	Monday	Tuesday: 9.30am – 5pm Wednesday: 9.30am – 5pm Thursday: 9.30am – 5pm Friday: 9.30am – 5pm (Reading Room closed 1-2pm) Saturday: 9.30am – 4pm

How can I comment?

No decisions have been made on the proposal at this stage and we are keen to hear all your views. You can comment until 12 March 2018.

Following the completion of the consultation the feedback will be analysed and then considered by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services before a final decision is made.

You can give us your feedback by completing our online questionnaire at www.kent.gov.uk/archivesearchroom. Alternatively please speak to a member of staff to request a paper copy of the questionnaire or email libraries@kent.gov.uk.

We will consider everyone's views and your comments will help us to shape our final decision.

Requesting alternative formats

If you require any of the consultation documents in an alternative format or language please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 421553 (text relay service number 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.