

Library Registration and Archive Draft Strategy

Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be added to over the course of the public consultation

1) Are you going to be closing libraries?

No library closures are proposed, we are retaining our 99 libraries.

2) Why did you choose the criteria you used to look at how busy libraries are?

Here is an explanation of each criteria proposed:

Visits per hour – a key measure of library use as it captures all visitors not just borrowers or PC users. Per hour to be fair to all libraries no matter how many hours they are open.

Loans per hour - Important to recognise our core role to provide books for loan.

% of unique users – Users that only use 1 library rather than customers who use more than 1. Important to recognise this in our calculations to help us deliver access to all.

% of public PC use – Digital inclusion and free access continues to be an important part of the modern library service.

% of customers who attend events – Libraries have an important role to bring people together to attend learning, cultural & social events. A list of the activities and events included in this count is covered under question 10.

These criteria reflect how people use the modern library service, and how well they are being used. If you think we should have considered other criteria, please include it when you complete the questionnaire.

3) What's the point of the consultation, haven't you already decided what you are going to do?

No, we haven't decided anything yet. We are consulting the public on a strategy for the whole LRA service and want as many people to respond to the consultation as possible. Your feedback is vital to shape LRA services for the future and will be fully considered before any decisions are made.

We have appointed an external company to analyse the consultation responses. They will produce a full consultation report that will inform decision making. We will continue to keep the public informed once the consultation is over, about the decisions we make and how we have reached them.

4) How are you going to advertise your services better?

We are looking to develop a new promotion and marketing strategy. This will look at a whole range of things, but some initial ideas so far include;

- New approach to how we brand and advertise the service
- Looking at our building branding
- Reviewing how we use social media
- Looking at how we could advertise what we do better

5) How are you going to develop the Archives service?

We want to continue to develop our Archives services in the following ways;

- Continue to digitise our archive collections so more available to people outside of Maidstone.
- Look at how we collect future archive collections which will be in a digital rather than paper format.

6) What is the point of a strategy?

Libraries, Registration and Archives needs a clear direction for the future to ensure that it is sustainable and maximises the positive outcomes it can deliver. Local Government faces a challenging financial climate with demand on services increasing. Kent is also changing in its demography and how people are choosing to use services. LRA needs to respond to all these things and evolve for the future, the strategy is our proposed way of doing this.

7) What are you proposing about the mobile libraries?

No changes to the current mobile service are proposed in the strategy. What we do propose to explore, subject to the strategy being adopted is a smaller more reliable, fuel efficient mobile vehicle. There is no proposal on this yet but we are aware of the mechanical breakdowns and the difficulty the current mobile vehicles have getting around some roads and want to explore the potential of a new approach.

8) Why have you spent all this money on brochures, banners and posters?

We want as many people as possible to know about the strategy so they have the chance to have their say and shape the future for the service. To ensure this happens we do need to spend some money on promotional materials and printing the strategy and questionnaire. We have not printed the EQIAs and some other supporting documents to reduce print costs but have made them available on our website or can be printed and sent on request.

9) Will you still have volunteers?

Yes - our volunteers will continue to add value to the services we provide as they do now.

10) Which activities and events have included in your tiering criteria ‘% of customers who attend events’?

List of activities and events in libraries

Adults with Learning Disabilities
Archives Event
Author Talk - Other
Author Talk - School Years
Business Event
CAB Surgery
Careers Advice
Carers
Code Clubs
Community Talk
Consultation
Dementia
Demonstration / performance / workshop
Digital Dens
Domestic Abuse
Dyslexia
Early Years Event - Other

eSafety
Ethnicity
Family History
Family Learning
Guest Performer - Early Years
Health - Other
Health - Well-Being Zones
Health Checks
Health Trainers
Hearing Impaired
Homework Club
Human Library
IT Buddy Session
LGBT
Local Stock Promotion
Local Studies
Meet & Practice English
Mental Health
Museum / Gallery Event
Online Sessions / Digital Inclusion (library staff led)
Promotion of LRA Services
Reading Group - Early Years
Reading Group - Other
Reading Group - School Years
Reading Well
Rhyme Time
School Holiday Activity
Smoking Cessation
Storytime
Surgery
Talk Time
Toddler Time
Use of Library Space / Office / Room
Visit - Children's Centre (centre staff led)
Visit - Children's Centre (library staff led)
Visit - Not School (library staff led)
Visit - Pre-school (library staff led)
Visit - Pre-school (pre-school staff led)
Visit - School (library staff led - not chargeable)
Visit - School (library staff led - chargeable)
Visit - School (school staff led - not chargeable)
Visually Impaired
Volunteer Social Meeting
Walk

11) Correction: Page 6 of the draft strategy document states that 3,265 baby rhyme time events were delivered 2017-18. On page 37 it states 6,950 baby rhyme time sessions were delivered. The 3,265 figure on page 6 is the correct one. We apologise for the error.

12) How much does KCC spend on library books?

The amount of funding allocated to our materials fund that covers books, newspapers and magazines including e-books, e-newspapers and e-magazines, is just over £1.2 million.

13) How many of your libraries have a local history archive (e.g. old newspapers, electoral rolls, Kelly's directories, photographs etc.) that can be visited?

There are 14 town centre libraries which hold extensive collections of local history material for in-depth coverage of that local area. There are 9 libraries which serve smaller towns and hold printed material, some newspaper, microfilm and maps. All other libraries will provide a collection of basic information on their locality in the form of books, pamphlets or other material. Access to online resources and book stock, through book ordering is available in all libraries. Several district libraries have close links with family history societies, local history societies and community archives too.

14) "become a digital archive by design", which sounds as though you'll be taking away the public's ability to view original documents.

We will not be taking away any physical items in our archive, nor the public's ability to view them. Making items available in a digital format provides another option and is important for customers who cannot visit Kent or get to Maidstone so that they can still access our collections. Currently parish registers can be seen on microfilm in local libraries and soon they will be available on Find My Past. Access to Find My Past, which also publishes registers held at Canterbury Cathedral Archives will be free to customers in Kent libraries. Digitisation of physical documents helps to widen access to the documents but also reduces the amount of physical handling of the original. However careful fragile historic documents are treated they can suffer with use. The archive service are custodians of these documents and have a responsibility to ensure they are protected for the generations to come. The statement "become a digital archive by design" relate to the strategy of The National Archives.

15) Partnering with FindMyPast means that people must have a subscription to access the site (except perhaps in a library, where terminal access is often limited). Many cannot afford this.

As above, there will be no subscription cost for customers who want to view Kent items in a digital format.

16) Will there be drop-in sessions at weekends and at more smaller libraries, so all communities can come along and voice the views. Lots of people work during the week.

The full list of drop-in sessions is below and includes some evenings and weekends:

Location	Date	Time
Ashford Library Ashford Gateway Plus, Church Road, Ashford, TN23 1AS	Monday 26 November	9:30- 12:30
Tenterden Library 2, Manor Row, High Street, Tenterden, TN30 6HP	Monday 26 November	14:00 - 17:00
Canterbury Library 18 High Street, Canterbury, CT1 2RA	Saturday 1 December	9:30- 12:30
Herne Bay Library 124 High Street, Herne Bay CT6 5JY	Saturday 1 December	14:00 - 17:00
Dartford Library Central Park, Market Street, Dartford, DA1 1EU	Thursday 6 December	16:00 - 19:00
Dover Library Dover Discovery Centre, Market Square, Dover, CT16 1PH	Wednesda y 12 December	9:30- 12:30
Deal Library Broad Street, Deal, CT14 6ER	Wednesda y 12 December	14:00 - 17:00

Gravesend Library Windmill Street, Gravesend, DA12 1BE	Friday 14 December	9:30- 12:30
Meopham Library Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0AH	Friday 14 December	14:00 - 17:00
Kent History and Library Centre James Whatman Way, Maidstone, ME14 1LQ	Wednesda y 2 January	9:30- 12:30
Sevenoaks Library Buckhurst Lane, Sevenoaks, TN13 1LQ	Thursday 3 January	16:00 - 19:00
Edenbridge Library The Eden Centre, Four Elms Road, Edenbridge, TN8 6BY	Saturday 5 January	9:30- 12:30
Folkestone Library 2 Grace Hill, Folkestone, CT20 1HD	Sunday 6 January	10:00 - 13:00
New Romney Library 82 High Street, New Romney, TN28 8AU	Wednesda y 9 January	9:30- 12:30
Sittingbourne Library Central Avenue, Sittingbourne, ME10 4AH	Saturday 12 January	9:30- 12:30
Sheerness Library Sheppey Gateway, 38 - 42 High Street, Sheerness, ME12 1NL	Monday 14 January	14:00 - 17:00
Tonbridge Library 1 Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge, TN9 1TG	Friday 18 January	9:30- 12:30
Tunbridge Wells Library Mount Pleasant Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1NS	Saturday 19 January	9:30- 12:30
Margate Library Thanet Gateway Plus, Cecil Street, Margate, CT9 1RE	Wednesda y 23 January	9:30- 12:30
Ramsgate Library Guildford Lawn, Ramsgate, CT11 9AY	Wednesda y 23 January	14:00 - 17:00

17) Your FAQ states that you measured, amongst other things, visits per hour and unique users. Could you please tell us how you measured these? For example, is unique users solely based on when someone uses their library card, for example to log into a computer or check out a book? How do you measure the amount of visits per hour?

Visits per hour – visits are counted in most libraries via people counters that are placed near the entrance. These count people in and out to the building and the total is halved to get a daily figure. At smaller libraries that do not have people counters we use a 5-bar gate count. These figures are input into a system which we use to calculate monthly, quarterly and annual figures. To calculate the hourly figure, we have divided the annual total by the number of hours that the library was open during the year. We have considered any library closures in those figures.

Unique users – every time a customer borrows a book or uses a PC it is recorded on our library management system. To identify the unique users, we have identified those customers who have only borrowed a book or used a PC in one library.

For locations with local study areas or galleries (such as Folkestone library) visitors are counted at the front door. We do not separately identify the number of customers who use the gallery or the heritage room. We want to ensure we capture customers who come in to our buildings for all reasons.

18) The document shows many libraries will reduce their operating hours. Will it be so many hours per day? Will certain days be closed entirely, or greatly reduced?

If the proposals go ahead we will engage with local customers around the most appropriate opening hours for each library. At the present time we have not looked at the number of hours per day but what we have specified is that every library will be open on a Saturday.

19) Some libraries will get a significant increase in opening hours. Why was it felt this was justified? Is this not at the expense of other libraries?

Our proposed new opening hours and tiering model reflects the data and evidence of how libraries are used and seeks to rationalise and optimise our opening hours across Kent. It will also provide a standard approach and consistency across the county for each tier. Depending on which tier a library is in depends whether its hours go up or down.

20) I've not seen any publicity in local press about this.

We submitted a press release before the start of the consultation and there has been press and other media coverage of the consultation. We cannot control what the press publishes but we have undertaken a thorough communications plan to ensure as many people know about the consultation as possible. This includes emails to stakeholders (such as library users, KCC Members, District and Parish councils, local MPs, groups, schools, youth forums etc.) letters, displays in libraries, posters, postcards, social media / website coverage and our drop-in events for example. Materials are available in all our service points and we have tried to engage as many partners as possible to help distribute our promotional materials.

21) Will there be job losses, and if so, how many if proposals go ahead?

If this proposal went ahead it would mean reducing the overall number of staff we employ in our libraries. This could be achieved in various ways, including, not recruiting to any vacancies, early retirement, as well as redundancies. We will do all that we can to minimise the impact on our staff who are highly valued and respected by both us and the public they assist in our libraries. We are not able to give numbers at this stage as we are at the consultation stage on the proposal and thus could be subject to change. Any numbers will be confirmed subject to any decision.

22) As more people are using Wi-Fi and free Wi-Fi is available at every library, does this mean that you plan to stop providing public desktop PC's?

No - LRA will continue to provide public desktop PC's at all of its 99 libraries. We have recently carried out a review at each library to see how well each PC is used. The review found evidence that PC use has dropped generally. LRA will consider reducing the number of PC's where they are not well used but is committed to continuing to provide public access PC's, alongside the Wi-Fi, at every library to meet local use and need.