

Camden libraries consultation

Research feedback – not a statement of council policy

Monday 9 May 2011

Introduction

This report provides feedback on the main findings of the Camden Libraries consultation.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey methodology – aims and objectives

- Survey designed to be short, easy-to-understand and to assess local needs
- Survey should engage those who live, work and study in Camden
- Key questions for the survey:
 - What types of library budget savings do the public feel are most appropriate?
 - How do the public use libraries?
 - What are the most important library services for the public?
 - What are the overall perceptions of different services received from Camden libraries?
 - What do the public consider to be the main challenges and opportunities for the library service?
 - What are the perceptions of people who had not used a library in the last 12 months (low/non users)?
- Consultation is not about a pre-conceived approach but to inform policy

Survey methodology – survey design

- Consultation is to engage people with an interest in public libraries in how these budget savings should be made and not whether they should be made – a clear requirement from the council
- Survey is free-standing: it is possible to complete the survey and to give a full and fair account of your views without recourse to any further information
- ‘Menu’ methodology for the quantitative survey:
 - Transparent: Gives public real choices based on real financial figure
 - Challenging: Highlights the reality that medium and small savings will be insufficient to deliver the £1.6m savings per year and it focuses on involving respondents in tough decisions
 - Engaging: Provides extensive set of options and a straight-forward decision-making mechanism – pick one, pick two
 - In piloting different options, the menu methodology was the most preferred

Survey methodology – support to the public

- The survey was well-designed and made to be engaging for the public
- Supplementary information was provided for people who wanted more information
- The survey includes an e-mail address for questions
- The survey was available in large print and translation if required
- Staff were briefed to be able to answer questions the public might have about the survey

Survey methodology – delivery and return

- The survey was made available both in paper and electronic formats.
- The e-survey was sent, with one reminder e-mail, to about 33,000 people on Camden Libraries e-mail database
- The survey was available in 13 libraries, to mobile and home library users and in a further 19 Camden service points
- Outreach work was undertaken by library staff taking the survey to people in the street
- The survey was open for two months to give the public and organisations ample opportunity to respond
- 5,114 surveys were received (2,781 paper surveys & 2,333 e-surveys)
- A further 1,069 responses have also been received a separate children's survey

Survey methodology – margin of error

Sample Size	Margin of Error ($\pm\%$)
5,000	1.4
3,000	1.8
1,000	3.1
750	3.6
500	4.4
350	5.2
100	9.8
50	14.0

Survey methodology – analytical method

- Non-response does not have any large impacts on sample tolerances
- Mixed methodologies: paper and electronic
- Top line results provided based on respondents who answered each question
- Effective sample size margin of error max 1.8%
- Conclusion: sample results are a highly accurate representation of the views of people who take an interest in libraries in Camden

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results – budget savings

Q1 To make the first £1 million worth of savings, please look at the following possibilities and select your preference for how the large savings could be made

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • 40% reduction in opening hours | 57% |
| • Swiss Cottage Central library to be closed | 12% |
| • Five smaller libraries to be closed | 13% |
| • Two larger libraries to be closed | 4% |
| • Three medium sized libraries to be closed | 5% |
| • Question not answered | 9% |

Survey results – budget savings

Q2 To make the next £500,000 worth of savings, please look at the following possibilities and select how the medium sized savings could be made. Each possibility provides savings of about £250,000.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • 10% reduction in opening hours across all libraries | 63% |
| • Close the mobile library service | 38% |
| • Fewer staff to help you and to run activities in libraries | 27% |
| • 40% reduction in spending on new books | 26% |
| • Two possibilities selected | 77% |
| • One possibility selected | 17% |
| • Question not answered | 6% |

Survey results – budget savings

Q3 To make the final £100,000 worth of savings, please look at the following possibilities and select how the smaller savings could be made. Each possibility provides savings of about £50,000.

- Increase the library charges you pay 65%
- Spend less on furniture and computers 38%
- Spend less on managing the libraries 27%
- Spend less on the local studies and archives service 28%
- Spend less on maintaining library buildings 10%

- Two possibilities selected 84%
- One possibility selected 10%
- Question not answered 6%

Survey results – innovations and suggestions

Q4 Your suggestions on other library savings we should look at (2500 comments)

Majority of respondents made suggestions that fall into the following themes:

- Increasing volunteering
- Increasing or introducing new fees and charges
- Creating rental opportunities and hiring out space
- Taking book donations
- Seeking advertising and sponsorship from private companies
- Focusing spending on books rather than CDs, DVDs or computers
- Sharing services with other local authorities

Some respondents used the question to comment that savings should be made elsewhere outside of libraries, by cutting senior managers pay or reducing the number of middle managers in the council for example.

Others stated that nothing should change and no library should be closed or hours reduced.

Survey results – innovations and suggestions

Q14 Are there any further comments that you would like to make about libraries?

(2100 comments)

- Majority of respondents said they think libraries are a vital service to themselves and others and should not be closed, identifying them to of particular use to the elderly, parents with small children and other children and young people
- Many respondents praised aspects of the library services and/ or mentioned specific libraries they would wish to remain open
- Some of the respondents commented on aspects of the current service that they did not like
- Some respondents commented that the consultation was not a fair one and that there was not enough choice in the options and no option to say that they did not want any cuts at all.

Survey results – appetite for volunteering (Q5 – Q6)

- Almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents are in favour of more volunteers being used in Camden libraries
- More than a third (36%) said that they would be interested in volunteering in Camden libraries
- The large majority (74%) of those interested in volunteering said they would be willing to volunteer for up to 10 hours a month

Survey results – library usage (Q9a)

97% of respondents had used a library in Camden in the last 12 months.

Q9a Which Camden Libraries have you used in the last 12 months:

- Swiss Cottage (53%)
- Kentish Town (25%)
- Camden Town (21%)
- Heath (20%)
- West Hampstead (20%)
- St Pancras (19%)
- Holborn (19%)
- Belsize (15%)
- Queen's Crescent (13%)
- Chalk Farm (12%)
- Kilburn (11%)
- Highgate (9%)
- Regents Park (5%)

Survey results – library usage (Q9b)

Q9b Which Camden Library do you use the most?

- Swiss Cottage (23%)
- Kentish Town (10%)
- West Hampstead (10%)
- Heath (9%)
- St Pancras (7%)
- Holborn (7%)
- Belsize (7%)
- Camden Town (5%)
- Queen's Crescent (5%)
- Kilburn (5%)
- Highgate (4%)
- Chalk Farm (4%)
- Regents Park (2%)

Survey results – library services (Q10a)

Q10a Which services did you use last time you visited the library? (Top five)

- Borrowing books or talking books (72%)
- Reading newspapers (37%)
- Looking for information (34%)
- Borrowing CDs or DVDs (28%)
- Using computers (27%)

Survey results – most important services (Q10b)

Q10b What are the most important things that Camden libraries can provide for you?

- Borrowing books or talking books (73%)
- Looking for information (38%)
- Reading newspapers (31%)
- Borrow CDs or DVDs (30%)
- Using computers (27%)

Survey results – library satisfaction (Q11)

Q11 Taking everything into account, what do you think of the library you visit the most?

- Very good (69%)
- Good (23%)
- Adequate (7%)
- Poor (1%)
- Very Poor (*%)
- Don't know (*%)

Survey results – library perceptions (Q12)

- 91% agreed that libraries are within easy reach of them
- 77% said that staff are friendly
- 75% agreed that Camden libraries opening times are convenient
- 69% said that the appearance inside Camden libraries is welcoming

Survey results – library perceptions (Q12)

- 68% are able to find the information they are looking for
- 63% said there are a good range of activities
- 62% agreed the range of books is good
- 60% said there are plenty of computers
- 55% agreed the range of CDs & DVD is good

Survey results – reasons for not using libraries (Q13)

Top five:

- Have the internet at home, so no need to use the library (30%)
- I prefer to buy books from a shop or online (24%)
- I'm too busy (22%)
- Prefer to go elsewhere e.g. coffee shops/ bookshops (12%)
- Opening hours aren't long enough (8%)

FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

Focus group profile

- Focus groups are a key part of Camden's approach to the consultation to ensure that local need is at the heart of this project
- To deliver this objective, discussions with the following community segments were undertaken:
 - Library Users Group Aged 16-20
 - Library Users Group Aged 21-45
 - Library Users Group Aged 45+
 - Library Users Parents Group
 - Low/non-library user Aged 16-45
 - Low/non-library user Aged 45+
 - Disabled library users
 - Friends of Libraries group
 - Stakeholder group of schools and other Camden services

Group profiles

Groups	Number of participants
Library Users Group Aged 16-20	7
Library Users Group Aged 21-44	9
Library Users Group Aged 45+	10
Parent Library Users	8
Disabled Library Users	7
Low/No Engagement with Libraries Aged Under 45	9
Low/No Engagement with Libraries Aged 45+	10
Friends group	7
Stakeholder group	6

Public group profiles

Total Participants - 60	Participants (%)
Male	40
Female	60
16-20	12
21-45	43
46-59	20
60+	25
Disabled	13
Unemployed	13
White ethnicity	59
Black and Minority Ethnic groups	41
Owner-occupiers	37
Social renters	38
Private Renters	25

Public group profiles

Libraries	Number of participants in focus groups with the public using each library
Belsize	5
Camden Town	7
Chalk Farm	1
Heath	1
Holborn	6
Local studies and Archives at Holborn	3
Highgate	2
Kentish Town	7
Kilburn	4
Queen's Crescent	6
Regent's Park	1
St Pancras	3
Swiss Cottage	20
West Hampstead	4
Mobile library	2

Focus group methods

- One and a half hour in duration
- Identify priorities for libraries services – voting on priorities
- Following this discussion, participants engage in a group exercise where they considered how they might make £1.6m savings
- The moderators explained that it was possible to make budget savings in three ways:
 - By making a saving in terms of the services and upkeep within the library
 - To reduce opening hours
 - To make library closures

Focus group methods

Groups were talked through the supporting information document and provided with the following budget information to make their decisions.

- In library potential savings
 - 40% reduction in spending on new books - £250,000 saving
 - Fewer staff to help the public and to run activities in libraries - £250,000 saving
 - Increase the library charges you pay e.g. overdue books - £50,000 saving
 - Spend less on managing the libraries - £50,000 saving
 - Spend less on the local studies and archives service - £50,000 saving
 - Spend less on library buildings maintenance - £50,000 saving
 - Spend less on furniture and computers - £50,000 saving
- Opening hours potential savings
 - Each 10% reduction in opening hours equals a £250,000 saving

Focus group methods

Library closure potential savings

- Central Library closure - £1 million saving
- Large library closure - £500,000 saving
- Medium sized library closure - £335,000 saving
- Mobile library closure - £250,000 saving
- Small sized library closure - £200,000 saving

Following the budget exercise, participants were asked why they made the decisions they did and whether they had any other innovations or suggestions for how Camden Libraries could save money or generate income.

The Stakeholder session as well as discussing priorities, barriers, as well as the budget saving exercise also examined strategic issues and opportunities for greater partnership working.

The Friends discussion covered key libraries services, barriers, and strategic views. The Friends did not undertake the budget exercise but instead had a discussion about how they thought the library service would change over the next five years.

KEY POINTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Access and opening hours

- Across all the groups, there was very limited evidence of participants having difficulties in terms of travel times or physical access to libraries.
- This said, concerns were raised by the Friends group about the ability of disabled people, the elderly and parents with children to travel to library facilities. These were highlighted in prioritisation exercises.
- In contrast, many participants identified opportunities for library opening patterns to begin at 9am for students and for parents after the school run and extension to 8pm for workers, students and to engage people in events.

Vision for libraries

- A reoccurring theme of the discussion is **what kind of libraries do residents want?** Greater clarity around this issue is seen as supporting better decision-making.
- There are a number of supporting and contrasting visions of what a library can and should be. The following are the visions of libraries which come through most strongly:
 - A multi-functional community facility that includes library services along with community, learning, children's activities and advice services
 - Fewer, better libraries with enhanced study space, cafe and better provision of books and computers
 - A community library model with highly localised provision
 - 'Retro' libraries – quiet places with a more traditional library offer – a greater focus on books

Library service priorities

Library service priorities reflect the different visions of libraries and different segments of local need:

- Library users 16 -20 : Study space & on-line sources
- Library users 21-45: Books & computers
- Library users 45+: Books, children's activities & community
- Disabled: Books & Talking Books
- Parents: Children's books, RhymeTime & the 'free' provided by libraries
- Unengaged 18-45: Cafe & Events & Activities offer
- Unengaged 45+: Books & Longer opening
- Stakeholders: Learning, Community & Advice
- Friends: All services are important

Barriers to usage

Barriers reflect priorities, different visions of libraries and different segments of local need. However, opening times is the one shared common barrier.

- Library users 16 -20 : Lack of space & opening hours
- Library users 21-45: Lack of space, opening hours & noise
- Library users 45+: Not enough books, opening hours & promotion
- Disabled: Physical access & the availability of staff
- Parents: Promotion, buying books & distance to the library
- Unengaged 18-45: Internet (Home/Mobile) & inconvenient
- Unengaged 45+: Opening hours, range of books & not reading
- Stakeholders: Not cool & literacy issues
- Friends: Access to libraries, opening hours, lack of marketing, quantity and quality of stock

Budget savings

The priorities for budget savings across the groups can be summarised as follows:

- Close two small libraries – usually Belsize and Chalk Farm
- Close one large library in the south of the borough – either St Pancras or Holborn
- Close the mobile library
- Fewer staff and management
- 10%-20% reduction in opening hours
- Less on furniture and computers

- The Friends highlighted potential savings from central services charges

Opportunities

Participants identified a range of opportunities for libraries and many believed that with these kinds of innovations Camden Libraries would not need to reduce their current level of service :

- Income generation
 - Stationery/book shop
 - Hire space
 - Rent space to businesses
 - Events/exhibitions
 - Charging: e.g. £1 per hour on PC
- Reduce costs by sharing space with other services
- Shared, cross-border library services
- Volunteers
- Energy efficiency
- Friends suggested that there were opportunities for better use of community space

Key feedback and insights

- Improve marketing and promotion
- What are Camden libraries going to be like?
- Involve and engage partners & stakeholders and the community
- Plan for the future – what's the growth strategy?