

<b>Committees</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Community and Children's Services – For information Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For information	02/11/2018 22/10/2018
<b>Subject:</b> Artizan Street Library Opening Hours	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Carol Boswarthack, Head of Barbican and Community Libraries, Department of Community and Children's Services	

### Summary

Evidence from the last Barbican and Community Libraries survey showed that a sizeable number of Artizan Street Library customers were discontented with the library's opening hours. Staff were tasked with seeking improvement and this was reported to the Committee. Customers were consulted on three different sets of hours and a clear preference was shown. While consultation was underway, an additional request for revised opening hours came via a residents' petition which underlined the need for change. At the end of May 2018, the new hours were introduced as a trial which runs until November 2018.

Usage evidence shows the increased weekday offering has been well received. In the four months prior to the pilot study, 27,373 people visited the library on weekdays. In the first four months of the new hours, 28,710 people visited on weekdays, an increase of 1,337 or nearly 5%. It is clear that these extended hours are being used. However, with an average of only two children and nine adults visiting each Saturday, this opening has not proved successful. In addition, statistical reports show that Artizan Street Library members have continued to visit and borrow items from Barbican Library on these Saturdays: Artizan Street Library members borrowed 269 items from Artizan Street Library and 472 items from Barbican Library over the first 20 Saturday openings. Continuing to open on Saturdays is unviable and, following the end of the pilot study, only the increased weekday opening hours will be retained.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Every three years, Barbican and Community Libraries carries out a full and detailed consultation with customers on services, stock and accessibility. The results of the 2017 survey demonstrated a level of discontent with the current opening hours, and this was reported to the Community and Children's Services and Culture, Heritage and Libraries committees in late 2017.
2. Since that time, staff have worked to provide a new set of opening hours to better satisfy library customers. From 1 February to 25 March 2018, consultation was carried out with Artizan Street Library customers and three different opening hours options were presented. During this consultation period, a residents' petition requesting longer opening hours at Artizan Street Library and Community Centre was presented to the Chairman of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee and the Head of Barbican and Community Libraries.
3. The preferred option – 8am to 5.30pm four days a week, 8am to 7pm one day a week, and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays – has been trialled since 14 May 2018.
4. A full consultation with staff was also carried out as staff contracts had to be temporarily adjusted to allow for Saturday working.

### **Current Position**

5. The additional weekday hours have proved to be successful. In the four months prior to the pilot study, 27,373 people visited the library on weekdays. In the first four months of the new hours, 28,710 people visited on weekdays, an increase of 1,337 or nearly 5%. Taking into account that one month of the earlier period was prior to the flood at the Centre – and therefore included users of the multi-hall – this is an impressive improvement.
6. Saturday opening has not proved to be successful. The average visitor figures for Saturdays are two children and nine adults. In the total period to date (20 Saturdays), a total of only 40 children and 187 adults visited the library on Saturdays. Of these, 10 were people just using the public toilet. On seven Saturdays, there were no child visitors.
7. Customer reaction to the revised hours has been mixed. There is clear support for the longer weekday hours. However, a number of negative comments about Saturday opening have been recorded – for example, "I didn't vote for the Saturdays. If I want to use a library, I go to the Barbican – it's far nicer to spend a few hours in, on the weekend," and "Why are you open on Saturdays? There is no point in Artizan Street opening Saturdays as there are so many other activities on in the city".

8. Statistical evidence shows that, on the Saturdays that the Library has been open, Artizan Street Library customers are still borrowing items from Barbican Library; 472 Barbican Library items were borrowed by Artizan Street Library customers on those Saturdays compared with 269 Artizan Street Library items.
9. There are additional running costs specific to Saturday opening. Apart from increased use of utilities, staff are also entitled to claim an unsocial hours payment for Saturday working.

## **Proposals**

10. Following the trial period, the longer weekday opening hours will be retained and Saturday opening discontinued.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

11. The new opening hours support Corporate Plan Objective 4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need: Support access to suitable community facilities, workspaces and visitor accommodation.
12. The new opening hours support the Community and Children's Services Business Plan's: Priority Three – Independence, Involvement and Choice:
  - People of all ages can live independently, play a role in their communities and exercise choice over their services; and Priority Five – Community:
  - People of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their community.

## **Implications**

13. Saturday opening is under-utilised and is not cost effective. Discontinuing Saturday opening will provide better staff coverage on weekdays to allow for after-school activities to take place (for example, a new Code Club is due to start in late autumn).

## **Conclusion**

14. Library customers have been consulted on a new set of opening hours for Artizan Street Library and Community Centre and these hours have been trialled since May 2018. The trial has clearly shown that longer weekday opening is needed and these revised hours will now be made permanent. Saturday opening has not proved viable and will be discontinued.

## **Appendices**

- None

**Carol Boswarthack**

Head of Barbican and Community Libraries

T: 020 7332 1123

E: [carol.boswarthack@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:carol.boswarthack@cityoflondon.gov.uk)