



Portfolio Holder Decision
Making Session

10am

7 April 2014

Item

1

Public

SHROPSHIRE ARCHIVES – REDUCED OPENING HOURS

Responsible Officer Mary McKenzie

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1. Summary

This report sets out the options for reducing opening hours at Shropshire Archives. The Portfolio Holder is asked to decide the future opening hours from 16 April 2014 for Shropshire Archives in light of the current staffing and financial issues and after taking into account the outcome of the public consultation.

2. Recommendations

To:

Agree the following opening hours at Shropshire Archives from Wednesday 16 April 2014

Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 4.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
Saturday (1 in 2)	10.00 – 2.00
Saturday (2 in 2)	Closed

TOTAL **20 hours** limited library service from 2.00pm

Reasons for decision:

Budget reductions at Shropshire Archives have resulted in reduced staffing levels from April 2014. This has meant that a reduction in opening hours has to be introduced.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

A public consultation has been carried out based on the questionnaire in Appendix 1. This offered a choice of 4 options. A total of 550 responses have been received.

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been carried out which identified that the change in opening hours will have a low to medium impact on customers and stakeholders. The service will remain open on 3 weekdays, plus open one Saturday in two. By retaining an element of weekend opening, access is provided for those in full time work or education.

The changes to opening hours will still allow Shropshire Council to meet its statutory requirements for access to records and information.

4. Financial Implications

The changes to the opening hours are necessary as a result of budget reductions. Shropshire Archives' budget for 2014/15 has been reduced by £58.5K from the 2013/14 budget of £495K gross (£315K net). 6 staff (3.44 FTE) are leaving at the end of March 2014 with an additional one (1 FTE) leaving at the end of July 2014. A staffing restructure is currently taking place with a formal end to staff consultation on 31 March 2014.

5. Background

Budget reductions require a major adjustment in staffing and functions at Shropshire Archives. Inevitably this means a reduction in the service's opening hours. A public consultation took place from 24 February 2014 to 23 March 2014 on a range of options based on opening 20 hours a week, a reduction of 10 hours from the current opening hours. (Appendix 1)

The current opening hours are:	Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
	Wednesday	10.00 - 5.00
	Thursday	10.00 – 8.00
	Friday	10.00 – 5.00
	Saturday	10.00 – 4.00

In recent years, the number of actual visitors to Shropshire Archives has gradually declined to an apparent steady figure of approximately 10,000. The current opening on Thursday evening is generally not well used. Saturdays vary in use, but most users do not stay for the whole day. The proposal is to reduce opening hours to 20 hours a week (currently 30). Staffing levels during opening hours will be reduced from 2.00 pm, providing a library style service without access to original documents.

This reduction in opening hours will ensure that the service can continue with other essential behind the scenes cataloguing and conservation work which supports public access to archives. An enquiry service will continue to be maintained from Tuesdays to Fridays. Local History Centres, housed in a number of libraries and other venues across the county, will also continue to provide access to their local and family history resources.

6. Consultation

The public's views on three options were sought with the additional option of suggesting their own opening pattern as a fourth option. The consultation was available online at www.shropshirearchives.org.uk and through a paper form distributed to libraries and other venues across the county.

The consultation closed on Sunday 23 March 2014. The results of the consultation were as follows:

Option A

Sunday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 4.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
Saturday (1 in 2)	10.00 – 2.00
Saturday (2 in 2)	Closed
TOTAL	20 hours, limited library service from 2.00pm

57.45% in favour

Option B

Saturday- Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00 - 4.00
Thursday	10.00 – 6.00
Friday	10.00 – 4.00
TOTAL	20 hours, limited library service from 2pm

14.36% in favour

Option C

Service closed one week a month with access to archive material during opening hours. Opening hours pattern either following Option A or Option B.

15.09% in favour

Option D

The public were asked to give their own suggestions under Option D. A variety of responses were received which are detailed in Appendix 2. There was no clear consensus on a particular additional option, though a majority of respondents were in favour of retaining an element of Saturday opening. This will be achieved if the recommended option is accepted.

13.09% in favour

There is therefore a clear preference for option A.

A full analysis of the results, including demographic details of the respondents, can be found in Appendix 2.

Shropshire Archives will be closed from Sunday 30 March to Tuesday 15 April, with the agreed new opening hours starting from Wednesday 16 April 2014. This closure period will allow staff to work on a planned move of archives and records to a refurbished store and to complete essential staff training following the restructure.

A communication plan is in place to ensure that the public are aware of the changes to the opening hours following the decision, and before the reopening on 16 April. This will ensure that a variety of media channels are used to communicate the news to the public as efficiently and effectively as possible. In addition, existing customers and stakeholders will be informed directly via existing communication channels.

7. Additional Information

Timetable

24 February 2014	Public consultation opens
23 March 2014	Public consultation closes
30 March to 13 April 2014	Shropshire Archives closed
16 April 2014	Shropshire Archives reopens with amended opening hours

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, given the extent of the consultation and the responses to this and having considered all the information, including the responses to the consultation, and the outcome of the Equalities Need Impact Assessment, the recommended option is Option A.

It is recommended that this is agreed and implemented from Wednesday 16 April 2014.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information): Appendix 1 – Public consultation form Appendix 2 - Analysis of results of public consultation
Key Decision: Yes Included within Forward Plan: Yes If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: N/A
Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility: Councillor Steve Charmley
Local Member: County wide
Appendices: Appendix 1 – Public consultation form Appendix 2 – Analysis of consultation results

Declaration of Interest

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

Signed

Portfolio Holder for

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment :

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Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.