

London Borough of Sutton

The Executive – 16 February 2009

Report of the Executive Head of Leisure and Libraries

SUTTON CENTRAL LIBRARY

Ward Location: Not Applicable

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Area Served: Borough-wide

Executive Councillor:

Councillor Graham Tope, Lead Member for Leisure and Libraries

Key Decision Report

Summary

This report outlines a proposal for the Council's Library Services to enter into a partnering agreement with the Sutton College of Learning for Adults (SCOLA) to run the Coffee Shop at Sutton Central Library. This development provides an opportunity to increase the opening hours of the Library and develop a number of new programming initiatives.

Recommendations

I recommend the Executive to:

1. agree that the Library Service enter into a Partnering Agreement with the Sutton College of Learning for Adults (SCOLA) to run the Sutton Central Library Coffee Shop from 1 April 2009,
2. agree that revenue funding of £20,000 is provided from the council's central contingency provision to invest in the Coffee Shop service, as outlined in the report.
3. agree the revised opening hours and programming arrangements for the Sutton Central Library,
4. grant to the Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure and the Strategic Director - Resources delegated authority to enter into a legal agreement with SCOLA to manage the Coffee Shop.

1. Background

- 1.1 There has been a coffee shop in Sutton Central Library since it opened in 1975. Initially the coffee shop was located in the adjacent Europa Gallery, but it was moved during the Sutton Central Library refurbishment in 2004, to become an integral part of the Library. It is now located next to the Page One area on the ground floor. It has always been part of the culture of the Library Service to offer this facility. Libraries across the country are introducing this essential facility to attract users, enhance the service, facilitate longer stays and create a welcoming and relaxing environment.
- 1.2 The Coffee Shop in Sutton Central Library has always been run by an external catering contractor, following a tendering programme. The operators have

consistently paid the Council a fixed monthly income. In January 2008 the catering contractor ceased operating so it became necessary to re-tender the service.

- 1.3 At the initial stage of the tendering process a wide variety of catering operators expressed an interest and keenness to manage this service. Over 15 companies submitted an expression of interest with nine selected to submit a full tender. However, when the tendering process closed in October 2008 only one company had submitted a tender, which was unacceptable. Follow-up investigations indicated that this was due to the downturn in the economy and a lack of financial credit available to invest in the business. (The tender required the new operator to install new equipment and catering cabinets).
- 1.4 The importance and necessity for a profitable catering service at Sutton Central Library led the Council and SCOLA to discuss a partnership arrangement to manage the Coffee Shop.

2. Issues

- 2.1 The proposal is that the Coffee Shop in Sutton Central Library is run under a partnership agreement with SCOLA from 1 April 2009. This will mean that SCOLA will relocate their existing Coffee Shop (in their building) to the space provided on the ground floor in the Central Library. This exciting and viable proposal has advantages for both parties. This arrangement will make provision for the users of the Library and SCOLA to share one outlet, thus allowing the service to expand the range of food and refreshments on offer.
- 2.2 SCOLA's current Coffee Shop mainly provides a counter service but also includes vending machines. These will be transferred to the Library as an additional service. The Coffee Shop will be open for longer hours than SCOLA's current operation and will be the catalyst for Sutton Central Library to make operational changes to increase its opening hours. By working in partnership with SCOLA there is the potential to link into various healthy eating initiatives through the Family Education provision that SCOLA supplies. In addition it may be possible to link in with similar initiatives with the PCT.
- 2.3 SCOLA will purchase the stock and supplies and provide the staffing for the new Coffee Shop. This may include the use of apprentices, so giving opportunities for younger people to receive training and work experience. The Library Service will provide the space, kitchen, food preparation and washing-up areas, and the fixtures and fittings as part of the agreement.
- 2.4 To enable the Library Service to provide the fixtures and fittings a sum of £20,000 is requested. This is needed to:
- provide display areas, servery and washing-up facilities (£10,000)
 - provide tables, chairs, sofas and wifi facilities (£3,500)
 - purchase signage and new flooring (£2,500)
 - redecorate the area and provide fixtures and fittings (£4,000).
- 2.5 All of the above equipment was the property of the last contractor and was removed at the end of the contract. SCOLA will provide some equipment including freezers, chillers, coffee machines, microwaves, Panini toasters and a soup kettle.
- 2.6 The Coffee Shop will be overseen by a Joint Management Board. It is proposed that membership of this body will be two representatives each from SCOLA and the

Council. Initially, the arrangement will be for a period of three years with an option for an additional year. During the first year (with the position reviewed annually thereafter), profit-sharing (50:50) arrangements will operate (after direct costs have been recovered, including a small sum for maintenance and equipment replacement). The potential income to the Library Service is £5,000, based on SCOLA's financial projections. The accounts and profit share will be reviewed independently.

- 2.7 SCOLA does not anticipate a downturn in service due to this relocation. There is capacity to increase the business substantially by capitalising on the new location within the Library and to capture and expand on the business achieved by the last contractor.
- 2.8 In order to meet the needs of SCOLA's customers (based on opening hours and current usage) it will be necessary to make operational changes to the core Sutton Central Library opening hours (although there might be slight changes in opening hours during holiday periods).
- 2.9 The new opening hours of the Coffee Shop would be:
Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 8.45 pm
Saturday, 9.00am to 5.00pm
Sunday, vending only (to be reviewed)
Existing opening hours of the Coffee Shop in SCOLA are:
Monday to Friday 9.00am – 3.00pm and again 7.00pm – 8.30pm
Saturday 10.00am – 12.00am
- 2.10 Sutton Central Library, however, has never been open to the public on Mondays. It is proposed to offer a limited Library Service from the ground floor, based on the successful out-of-hours model at the Library @ Phoenix. This will fully utilise the self-service technologies and require minimal staffing.
- 2.11 The library services open on Mondays will include:
- Self-service book return and the issue of library items
 - The Coffee Shop
 - The Readers' Lounge – including daily newspapers and popular magazines
 - The Page One Area – a small selection of books for borrowing, new titles (both adult and children's) and large-print books.
 - Customer Services – joining the library, quick general enquiries, collection of reserved items, Freedom passes, waste sacks.
- 2.12 The following services would not be available
- Hire of DVDs, CDs, Spoken Word
 - Full range of books on all floors
 - Full and detailed enquiries answered
 - The IT Suite.
- 2.13 It may be necessary to increase the amount of available seating for coffee shop customers. Contingency plans are in had to allow for this with all health and safety issues being taken into consideration.

- 2.14 This limited service will be run by one to two members of the Library staff with a porter providing security in the building. Staff will be fully consulted about changes to their working pattern. It is not envisaged that this will cause any problems.
- 2.15 Friday evenings (6pm to 8pm) in the Sutton Central Library is a period of relatively low use, with issues averaging just over 100 items in the two-hour period. The IT Suite operates at about 50% capacity compared with over 75% the rest of the week. It is therefore proposed that the whole Library close at 6.00pm on a Friday, with just the ground floor remaining open. This would release enough staff hours to enable the ground floor of the Library to open on Mondays. However, it will be necessary to close the Library and the Coffee Shop on six Monday evenings each year when Full Council meetings are held in the adjacent Europa Gallery.
- 2.16 This enhanced service will be carefully promoted to the public to emphasize the benefits whilst not raising false expectations that a full library service will be offered on Mondays.
- 2.17 The Library Service would also take the opportunity to investigate ways of using the parts of the building that are closed on Friday evenings for specific groups of people and targeted events. For example, the Media Too area could be used to provide recreational activities for young people in conjunction with the Youth Service, and the IT Suite could be used for structured computer learning, which is not possible when it is open to the general public.
- 2.18 The partnership arrangement with SCOLA has the potential to open up to new users of all library services, to increase the usage/visitor numbers and to increase the satisfaction levels of people visiting the Library. The initiative will also contribute to our National Indicators through increased use of public library services for recreational, leisure and informal learning purposes. There will be opportunities to develop new audiences via promotion of skills for life projects in partnership with SCOLA, potential for increased IT provision (eg PULLS courses) in line with the digital citizenship agenda and enhanced access to council services (issue of Freedom Passes, garden waste sacks etc Financial Implications

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 As it stands, there is no provision in either capital or revenue budgets in 2008/09 for the £20,000 investment in fixtures and fittings required for the reopening of Coffee Shop. It is proposed that provision is released from the Council's central contingency to meet this one off additional cost.
- 3.2 It is expected that an overall surplus of £10,000 per annum will be achieved from the new Coffee Shop of which the Council will receive £5,000 per annum income to reflect existing draft budgets. As there would be no income without the required investment in fixtures and fittings, the investment would effectively be recovered over four years.
- 3.3 Additional costs associated with the limited opening of the library on Mondays will be offset by reducing hours of opening on a Friday and contained within existing budgets.
- 3.4 There are significant non financial benefits from this initiative such as partnership working with SCOLA including opportunities for apprenticeships and extending the service offer of the Sutton Central Library to include limited opening on a Monday and provision of a refreshments service throughout the week.

4. Influence of the Council's Core Values

- 4.1 The partnership arrangement with SCOLA promotes the Council's core values of working in partnership and provision of accessible services. It has enabled the library service and SCOLA to work together in planning and organising change and work towards delivering excellence through the provision of high quality, cost effective services for the benefit of all users. It contributes directly to the Council's priorities specifically promoting and developing active and inclusive communities and provision of a safe and welcoming environment for all and encouraging economic regeneration. The project is central to the Council's vision of building a community in which all can take part and all can take pride.

5. Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The provision of coffee shop facilities in the central library will help to achieve the objectives set out in the Council's Equalities & Diversity Policy. The initiative will provide accessible and relevant service provision responsive to service user need and demand. It is socially inclusive enabling all sections of the community to participate, use and benefit from the services offered regardless of age, sex, disability or ethnic background. There are no negative effects envisaged for any minority group as a result of this initiative.

6. One Planet Living

- 6.1 In the London Borough of Sutton food accounts for around 28% of our eco-footprint but it's easy to reduce this impact and be healthier too. The ecological footprint of our food is so high because we waste around a third of the food we buy, because most people in the UK have a high meat and dairy diet, because of transportation (food miles) and because of energy intensive agriculture.
- 6.2 The coffee shop will help reduce this impact, where possible buying local, seasonal and organic produce with reduced amounts of packaging. The shop will also offer customers the option of purchasing low-dairy or non-dairy alternatives for their drinks e.g. soya milk, in addition to standard milk (this is standard practice).
- 6.3 The London Borough of Sutton is a Fairtrade authority that has made a commitment to supporting Fairtrade and using products with the FAIRTRADE Mark. The Coffee shop will support this by offering customers the option of Fairtrade products (for example teas, coffee, sugar, chocolate bars etc).
- 6.4 The shop will also actively recycle its waste and encourage customers not to create waste. They will do this by offering their used coffee grounds for compost, buying and selling products with minimal packaging. The shop will also limit the use of disposable cups and plates ('eat in' customers will be given reusable/washable cups and plates not disposable ones). Takeaway customers will be encouraged to bring their own mug or thermos or buy one from the coffee shop. The shop will offer small discounts to people who use reusable mugs instead of disposables (this is also standard practice).
- 6.5 As this is a contract over £5000 the company need to provide an Environmental Policy and send it to the Environmental Sustainability Officer

7. Background Papers

None

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