

# Press Release

Communications PO Box 11, Chelmsford CM1 1LX

## **Essex Libraries: Be part of the consultation**

Essex County Council is launching a countywide consultation on its pattern of Library opening hours next month, as budget pressures mean that sensible cost savings must be made.

Proactive work already completed by Essex Libraries' staff means that, in contrast to many other parts of the country, NO Library in Essex will be closed down. Furthermore, the Mobile Library service will continue to travel to all the destinations which it currently serves.

However, opening times in static Libraries must be reviewed; it is proposed that 54 libraries will see a reduction in opening hours, six will stay the same but will see a change in their pattern of opening hours and 13 will see no reduction or change to the pattern of opening hours.

Wherever changes are being proposed, local residents are being encouraged to be part of the consultation, expressing their preference between two patterns of opening hours.

To create a fair and strategic county-wide approach to this reorganisation, the total number of opening hours for each Library has, for the first time, been determined using catchment population figures. \*

The new hours of opening will see a more memorable pattern within each library, making it simpler for users to know when they can visit their local branch.

In addition, wherever possible the reorganisation will see a more co-ordinated approach to making Library services available in any one area, so that on a day when one branch Library is closed, another in the vicinity is likely to be open.

Essex County Councillor Jeremy Lucas, Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts, who has responsibility for Libraries, said: "Consultation is a crucial part of the Libraries' reorganisation. We want to offer our customers the opportunity to express their preference for the pattern of opening that best suits their needs.

"Essex Libraries have already taken a number of steps to reduce the net cost of the service, partly by actively seeking ways of increasing income. For example, since 1st January 2011 we have been delivering the Library service for Slough Borough Council, to the mutual benefit of the two authorities.

"We have also established a variety of income-producing shared use of our Library buildings with other partners within Essex, whether a District or Parish Council or other parts of the public sector such as the NHS or the Police.

"These measures are not sufficient in themselves to make all the required savings but the approach we have adopted is flexible enough to offer the opportunity of extending opening hours again wherever we can introduce further revenue-producing arrangements with other organisations."

This opening hours consultation will run for six weeks from Monday 14 February until Sunday 27 March 2011. Customers can register their preferred option by completing a form at their local library or following the instructions online at [www.essex.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.essex.gov.uk/libraries) from 14 February.

**ENDS**

**For further information contact Lorna Gott in Communications on 01245 433150 or email [lorna.gott@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lorna.gott@essex.gov.uk)**

*\*Catchment areas have been determined by plotting postcodes of customers using a specific library, and identifying the population numbers of those areas (using census ward population data).*

## **Notes to Editors**

**No further information will be available until the public consultation begins on the 14 Feb, when all options will be available for review.**

The following libraries will see no change to their current opening hours and will not be involved in the consultation:

- Kelvedon
- Silver End
- South woodham ferrers
- Stock
- Tiptree
- West Mersea
- Wivenhoe
- Chigwell
- Wickham bishops
- Manningtree
- Stansted
- Thaxted
- Laindon

The following libraries will not see a reduction to current opening hours but will see a change in pattern of opening hours:

- Great Tarpots
- South Benfleet
- Great Baddow
- Stanway
- Waltham abbey
- Burnham

The remaining 54 libraries will see a reduction in opening hours and see a change to the current pattern of opening hours.

### **RFID installation temporary closures**

Tiptree, Earls Colne, Walton and Writtle Libraries will be temporarily closed during part of the consultation for the installation of a new self service system which will enhance service provision to customers. During this time consultation documents will be available from other local venues (to be advised), alternatively customers can vote online.

<b><u>Library</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Closure</u></b>
<b><u>Tiptree</u></b>	4 February 2011 – Reopen 7 March 2011
<b><u>Earls Colne</u></b>	8 February 2011 – Reopen 22 March 2011
<b><u>Writtle</u></b>	8 February – 29 March 2011
<b><u>Walton</u></b>	4 March 2011 – Reopen 4 April 2011