APPENDIX 1

FINAL REPORT

LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES REVIEW
SCRUTINY PANEL
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LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES REVIEW SCRUTINY PANEL
MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Karen Bellamy (Chair)
Member for Higham Hill Ward

Councillor Peter Barnett
Member for Wood Street Ward

Councillor Jemma Hemsted
Member for Valley Ward

Councillor Khevyn Limbajee
Member for Grove Green Ward

Councillor Gerry Lyons
Member for Forest Ward

Councillor Elizabeth Phillips
Member for Cann Hall Ward

Councillor Alan Siggers
Member for Valley Ward

Substitute Members

Councillor Bob Sullivan
Member for Leyton Ward

Councillor Terry Wheeler
Member for Cathall Ward
Cabinet Members, Council Officers and Community Representatives

The following Members, Council Officers and Community representatives supported the work of the Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel by attending Scrutiny Panel meetings and submitting information to Members of the Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Geraldine Reardon  Portfolio Member for Leisure, Arts & Culture
Michelle Moloney    Assistant Director, Residents First
Mark Yeadon    Consultation Manager, Strategy & Communications
Caroline Rae    Group Manager, Culture & Leisure
Paul Drumm    Group Manager, Culture & Leisure
Betty Varnava    Assistant Director, Finance
James Thomson    Principal Accountant, Finance
Simon Ward    Service Excellence, Residents First
James Partis    National Graduate Trainee
Ros Kane    Save Harrow Green Library Campaign & Carefree Kids
Anna Rinaldi    Acacia Children’s Centre
Nick Shasha and Kaili Jarv (Research Population & Migration, Policy Unit)
Nicholas Russell  Councillor, London Borough of Waltham Forest, Cann Hall Ward

Acknowledgements

Members of the Library and Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel wish to thank all those Members, Council Officers and community representatives who attended the Scrutiny Panel meetings as witnesses and who submitted written evidence. Members appreciated the commitment and co-operation received in support of the Scrutiny Panel’s objectives.
1. Executive Summary

1.1 This is the final report of the Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel. The Scrutiny Panel convened on five occasions to question Cabinet Members and Officers responsible for drafting the proposals for the alternative delivery arrangements for the Council's library and information services within the borough. The Scrutiny Panel also took evidence from local community representatives.

1.2 The related public consultation process and consultation proposals for the Libraries & Information Services were reported to and approved at the Cabinet meeting of 14th June 2011. A public consultation exercise in respect of the libraries and information services proposals was undertaken from 20th June to 9th September 2011.

1.3 The Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel convened for the first time on 3rd August 2011 for a Scrutiny Panel planning meeting, at which the Scrutiny Panel's terms of reference were agreed. The final Scrutiny Panel meeting convened on 1st September 2011.
2. **Background**

2.1 At its meeting of 9th June 2011, Members of the OSMC were informed that the Council had commenced a review of the Library and Information Service in order to:

- identify a new vision, objectives and service model for the Library and Information Service, taking account of local need and the level of resources available; and
- set out specific proposals for delivering the new vision, objectives and service model in practice.

2.2 It was noted that the proposals which included the possible closure of two libraries, were to be the subject of a detailed consultation exercise, and that Cabinet approval of the Exercise was being sought.

2.3 Additionally Members were informed that it was hoped that a new working regime for the Library service would achieve the saving of approximately £1 million that had been identified as necessary in the Council Budget and Council Tax report.

2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee subsequently reported to the Cabinet meeting of 14th June 2011 with the following initial recommendations:

i) asked to note that a short term Scrutiny Panel is to be established to work with Officers on the libraries review consultation process;

ii) recommended to ensure that the proposals for the future of Libraries are considered in the light of the Council’s Key Priorities, especially those relating to Poverty and Deprivation;

i) recommended to consider the introduction of volunteer run community libraries as part of this review.

**The Council's Proposed Option for the Future of Library Services**

2.5 The proposed vision for the library and information service is as follows:

2.6 Waltham Forest’s Library Service will offer a modern and comprehensive network of libraries with a high quality library stock, free internet, excellent customer care and access to a range of Council services. The Library Service will encourage local people to use and get involved with their libraries and make sure that all services provide value for money.

2.7 In order to deliver this within the budget now available the Council proposes to adopt a neighborhood approach with a set of four ‘Library Plus’ libraries in town centre’s supported by four ‘Library Locals’.
2.8 All residents would live within 1.5 miles of a library and 2 miles of a Library Plus.

2.9 Library Plus and Library Locals would both deliver a core offer of:

- Relevant and up-to-date information and books in a range of formats
- High quality library buildings
- Free internet access
- A range of learning opportunities
- A wider choice of local services to reflect local needs
- Excellent customer services delivered by knowledgeable staff

2.10 In addition, Library Plus branches will provide:

- Access to an enhanced library service, with better resources
- Open 7 days a week
- Access to a wide range of other Council services and services delivered by external partners

2.11 It proposed that the four Library Plus branches will be located in each of the borough’s town centre’s, i.e.:

- North Chingford Library – opening hours would increase by 14%
- Walthamstow Library – opening hours would increase by 6%
- Leyton Library – opening hours would increase by 27%
- Leytonstone Library – opening hours would increase by 6%

2.12 After careful consideration of all of the evidence available, it is proposed that the four Library Local branches will be located at:

- Hale End Library – opening hours would decrease by 42%
- Higham Hill Library – opening hours would decrease by 39%
- Lea Bridge Library – opening hours would decrease by 39%
- Wood St Library – opening hours would decrease by 39%

2.13 Each Library Local will be open for 30 hours per week with opening hours agreed to meet local needs.

These proposals assume the closure of the following libraries:

- South Chingford Library
- Harrow Green Library

2.14 The reason for these proposed closures include:
• Other libraries are accessible to local residents – ultimately, all residents will be within 1.5 miles of a library, and no more than 2 miles of a Library Plus
• They are less used than other nearby facilities
• The library buildings are in a poor state of repair and would require significant investment to bring them up to standard

Map of Current Library Provision and Proposed Model
3. Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel: Methodology

3.1 The Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel convened on five occasions:

- 3rd August 2011
- 9th August 2011
- 15th August 2011
- 22nd August 2011
- 1st September 2011

3.2 Members of the Scrutiny Panel convened five Scrutiny Panel meetings to hold question and answer sessions with Officers, Councillor Geraldine Reardon (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts & Culture) and representatives from community groups. The Scrutiny Panel also received written information and submissions from Officers and Councillors which clarified some matters raised at the Scrutiny Panel meetings and offered alternative options to those detailed in the public consultation.

4. Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel: Terms of Reference

4.1 Review the public engagement processes supporting the public consultation in relation to future provision of the boroughs library services.

4.2 Meet with responsible lead Officers, Ward Members and Cabinet Member/s to facilitate Q&A sessions with the Scrutiny Panel.

4.3 Meet with any other individuals / bodies and community organisations as the Scrutiny Panel deems necessary in order to fulfil its objectives.

4.4 Submit any recommendations arising from the Library Services Review for the consideration of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee / Cabinet in respect of:

- alternative policy proposals to support the delivery of a public library service within the Borough.

- Any other matters which the Scrutiny Panel determines as relevant to the Library Services Review detailed proposals.
5. **Objectives and Expected Outcomes**

5.1 The remit for the Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel was to consider the proposals under public consultation for the Library and Information Service and to identify alternative proposals which would help to deliver a comprehensive library and information service across the borough, whilst supporting the delivery of the required £1M efficiency savings.

6. **FINDINGS OF THE SCRUTINITY PANEL**

**FINANCIAL PLANNING AND REQUIRED EFFICIENCIES**

6.1 The Scrutiny Panel noted that the salary bill for libraries staff was very high as a comparator with other boroughs and further noted that this was the case whilst the service was consistently overspending its budget annually. Consequently, Members were of the opinion that the annual budget allocated to the service was not truly reflective of the operational costs involved. Furthermore, the annual budget required proactive monitoring throughout the year to allow for remedial action to be taken to control growing overspends.

6.2 In respect of the projected efficiencies arising from the two library closures, £900,000 staffing and £100,000 premises respectively, further clarification was sought by the Scrutiny Panel as to how these figures had been arrived at and whether they could be supported as deliverable savings. Members also sought clarification as to what alternative options, if any, had been considered to provide the required efficiencies. The Scrutiny Panel recognised and agreed with the Portfolio Member that continued 'top slicing' of existing and future budgets for the Library and Information Service was not a feasible option to produce the level of required savings.

6.3 The Scrutiny Panel noted that the report to Cabinet had stated that with ten libraries in the borough, Waltham Forest Council had the fewest number of libraries in comparison with any other London borough, but the consultation proposal was that extensive operational hours would be introduced i.e. seven day opening via the Library Plus sites. Scrutiny Members questioned whether the option of reducing opening hours could be applied in order to retain all ten libraries, with opening hours tailored to meet the demand for each library site. The Scrutiny Panel noted that the Council had received legal advice with regard to the proposed libraries structure and that it was considered to meet and comply with existing legislative guidance.

6.4 At the time of writing, Officers were not in a position to advise the Scrutiny Panel what additional costs would be involved to develop the Library Plus sites. However, the Scrutiny Panel was advised that the proposed Library Plus model required a different structure to that which was presently in place, as it would be supporting both library and customer services. Delivery of such a service would only be possible through restructuring and amalgamating some exiting services. Scrutiny Members were informed that all proposals detailed in the public consultation had been financially appraised and were considered to be affordable.
6.5 With reference to the detail in the Cabinet report highlighting library cleaning costs and facilities management support costs generally, the Scrutiny Panel was advised that the contractual services costs were recognised as being expensive in comparison with other London boroughs. Scrutiny Members questioned whether the existing contract arrangements could be reviewed and a procurement exercise undertaken across the Libraries services in respect of its support services in order to realise better value for money and to realise further budgetary savings.

6.6 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that the library service had experienced budget end of year over spends on a consistent basis. Scrutiny Members concluded that this implied either that the annual base budget for the service had not been arrived at correctly, and did not therefore reflect the true demand placed on budget for operating the service, or that the existing budgets required greater proactive, robust management from the service itself to contain potential overspends.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

6.7 The Scrutiny Panel raised a number of issues in relation to transport and accessibility to the remaining library sites in the borough in the event that South Chingford and Harrow Green libraries were closed, particularly with regard to access issues for children and young people. Scrutiny Members raised specific concerns with regard to young people and related gang / postcode issues. Scrutiny Members noted that some young people would have such concerns to the extent that it would be highly unlikely that they would be prepared to travel across the borough to access library facilities outside of their immediate locality.

6.8 A Member of the Scrutiny Panel observed that any potential redevelopment of the South Chingford site would prove difficult and would involve rights of way issues, whilst Wood Street did have significant redevelopment potential. In terms of transportation and access issues, it was observed that there would be easier access from Hingham’s Park to two of the proposed Library Plus sites. Therefore, it seemed that insufficient weight had been given to transport and development considerations in relation to other libraries in the borough.

6.9 In terms of assessing resident’s transport and accessibility needs to access the borough’s library sites, the Scrutiny Panel was informed that Transport for London’s PTAL (Public Transport Accessibility Level) modelling system had been used. Accessibility had been recognised as a key criterion to be taken into consideration in forming the consultation proposals for the Library and Information Service. An equalities analysis also addressed issues of accessibility and explored whether any specific groups in the community would be disproportionately affected in terms of access.

6.10 The Scrutiny Panel was further advised that it had been recognised that the consultation proposals would impact negatively on some existing libraries users. It was acknowledged that there was a need to identify any such groups in order to mitigate negative impacts as far as possible. In relation to transport and accessibility issues, the Scrutiny Panel was informed that these matters
would be identified by Officers, mitigating actions identified and applied and that subsequent actions taken would continue to be monitored.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

6.11 The Scrutiny Panel paid close attention to the proposed extended opening hours for the Library Plus sites, specifically in relation to proposed Sunday opening hours. Officers advised the Scrutiny Panel that user surveys conducted to date indicated library users were in favour of the proposed extended opening hours. It was acknowledged, however, that it was difficult to gauge anticipated demand at this point in time.

6.12 Members of the Scrutiny Panel did note that figures detailed in the Cabinet report relating to Sunday opening for the Walthamstow and Leytonstone libraries were 116 and 15 users respectively, and questioned whether extended opening hours were therefore justified. The Scrutiny Panel sought clarification as to what services would be offered differently on a Sunday through the Library Plus sites, and was advised that a range of ‘non professional’ routine service requests would be dealt with; for example, missed waste collections, council tax enquiries etc. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that these arrangements were currently being piloted at Leyton library, with the aspiration that such a model could be promoted to encourage self service via on-line transactions through library sites. Scrutiny Members noted that a Customer Services Officer would be available on any Sunday at the Library Plus sites to assist resident’s with their service enquiries. The Scrutiny Panel was of the opinion that take up of non professional service requests at Library Plus sites on Sunday’s should be monitored and reported to Cabinet to ensure that the number of resident’s actually using the service made fiscal sense and provided value for money.

6.13 The Scrutiny Panel sought a break down as to what a thirty hour week entailed for libraries staff and how the revised working arrangements would be delivered. Scrutiny Members learned that the Job Descriptions for library staff would be redrafted to provide a more flexible combined libraries /customer services model. It was envisaged that the Library Local sites would operate shorter hours, determined locally according to the needs of each library site. Consultation would be undertaken with residents to determine suitable opening hours for each library catchment area.

6.14 With regard to the seven day week opening proposal for Library Plus sites, the Scrutiny Panel was informed that alternative proposals and options were also being received through the public consultation process. All alternative options received through the public consultation would be reviewed and subjected to a fiscal /needs assessment. Regarding Sunday opening hours at Library Plus sites, the Scrutiny Panel thought it questionable that the policy should go forward at the expense of two library closures.

6.15 In response to the Scrutiny Panel’s suggestion that all library sites be closed on Sunday and Monday (and the resource redirected to support some form of provision at all ten library sites), the Scrutiny Panel was advised that although library usage was not prolific on Monday’s, demand for generic customer services was high following the weekend, which would particularly impact on the proposed Library Plus sites. Scrutiny Members noted that the Library Local
sites would be subject to a review considering their operational effectiveness once established.

6.16 Councillor Hemsted sought clarification as to whether alternative options for the library service had been pursued and noted that attempting to consult with Head Teachers during the summer period was poor practice. Mark Yeadon advised Members that the public consultation commenced with Head Teachers two weeks prior to the end of the summer term. All Head Teachers were written to and reminders were scheduled to be despatched before the end of the consultation period. Schools located in the Chingford South / Harrow Green catchment areas would be targeted. All Community and stakeholder groups would also receive a reminder to respond before the end of the consultation period. The Scrutiny Panel agreed that delivering significant public consultation through the recognised summer holiday period should be avoided in future in order to provide residents with the best opportunity to respond to Council consultation exercises.

6.17 With regard to alternative options considered but not progressed for the Library and Information Service, the Scrutiny Panel sought clarification as to how any alternative options which had been considered had subsequently assisted in shaping the current proposals. Members of the Scrutiny Panel agreed that they did not feel they had received a definitive response to this question.

6.18 The Scrutiny Panel also sought clarification as to how the alternative options received through the public consultation would be reported publicly at the end of the consultation period itself. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that Cabinet would receive the detail for each alternative option received, with each proposal assessed against the criteria of:

- Legal requirements
- Needs Assessment
- Financial savings and economies

6.19 Members of the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it was imperative that the findings of the assessment process against the set criteria detailed above be made available and published in the public domain.

6.20 With regard to the financial figures underpinning the one million pounds savings requirement, the Scrutiny Panel queried whether the option of sharing staff hours between the South Chingford and Harrow Green library sites had been considered. Secondly, in terms of the fixed (library) building costs, the Scrutiny Panel queried whether use of the current library sites could be increased and expanded further to incorporate the delivery of other Council and partner services (for example, the synergy with the Children’s Centre and library site in Harrow Green, referenced below) for which the Library and Information Service could charge and reduce overall operating costs.

6.21 The Scrutiny Panel noted that in respect of stock levels, Harrow Green and South Chingford library sites carried low stock volumes (as did the Lea Bridge
and Higham Hill library sites), both for children’s and adult’s books and music (Harrow Green had the lowest non fiction and children’s stock). When reviewing adult fiction stock, the Scrutiny Panel noted that Harrow Green had the lowest stock volume of all libraries in the borough, yet remained open for 53 hours per week. Scrutiny Members concluded that as the smaller libraries did not hold comparable stock levels or provide the same ICT offer as the larger library branches, it was inevitable that residents would be attracted towards the larger library sites. Questions therefore arose through the Scrutiny Panel as to whether the Harrow Green library was neglected in terms of its book stock and ICT offer.

6.22 In respect of accessing ICT via a library site, the Scrutiny Panel noted that 18% of users had stated they had good access to ICT provision via Harrow Green Library, whereas none had stated the same in respect of Lea Bridge library. In the opinion of the Scrutiny Panel Members, figures detailed in then Cabinet report did not tally and in some instances lacked clarity. The Scrutiny Panel agreed that the presentation of some data sets in the Cabinet report did support and reinforce the requirement for some form of weighting to be applied to users accessing the library sites to undertake specific activities. The Scrutiny Panel agreed that if such an exercise was undertaken, Harrow Green library would be placed in a better position in comparison with other library sites in the borough.

6.23 Members of the Scrutiny Panel also noted that the Cabinet report detailed Harrow Green and Higham Hill library sites as supporting the highest proportion of young users of library services in comparison with any other libraries in the borough. The Scrutiny Panel questioned why these factors had not been taken into account in forming the options under public consultation. The Scrutiny Panel further observed that the lowest borrowing figures for all library sites occurred on a Monday. Consequently, it was questioned whether there was a further option possible whereby all ten library sites remained closed on Monday (i.e. 70 hours across the library sites) and that the proposal for extended Sunday opening hours was not proceeded with. The Scrutiny Panel thought it feasible for the saved resource arising from Sunday and Monday library closures to be applied to keeping some form of library provision at all ten existing sites during the remainder of the week.

HIERARCHY OF NEED AND WEIGHTING LIBRARY USAGE

6.24 Officers advised the Scrutiny Panel that the existing legislative framework was helpful with regard to weighting of need and undertaking necessary Needs Assessment. The legislative framework already decreed that there should be a comprehensive and efficient library service made available locally and that provision needed to be made for particular groups to be assessed with regard to the services provided them. The Scrutiny Panel was further advised that libraries and equalities legislation required all groups accessing the service to be assessed, but not through a hierarchy of need assessment model. The Portfolio holder stated that by its very nature any form of user weighting model would be subjective when used to prioritise the needs of different user groups.

6.25 With reference to the Waltham Forest Development Plan section of the Cabinet report (pages 36-39), which compared Lea Bridge and Harrow Green library profiles, the Scrutiny Panel was unsure why the two library sites were subject to
It was noted that 16% of Harrow Green library users visited the library in order to complete homework, whilst the percentage using Lea Bridge library for this purpose was not detailed at all. Members of the Scrutiny Panel agreed that given the higher population densities recorded in the south of the borough, where suitable environments for home study may consequently be hard pressed, it was likely that more children and young people would use the library environment to undertake academic study away from their residential home. Accordingly, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that this type of library usage and activity should be accorded greater weighting in a hierarchy of need in comparison to, for example, people attending their local library in order to read a newspaper.

6.26 Officers did advise the Scrutiny Panel that regard must be given to age through the analysis undertaken to date and in accord with existing legislation. Any such areas would have to be acknowledged and addressed via the Library Services Development Plan (LSDP). The Scrutiny Panel agreed that the future LSDP be reported to Cabinet to ensure that all required needs assessments had been recognised and sufficiently addressed.

6.27 The Portfolio holder recognised the points made, but saw them as recognition of need rather than a viable means of applying a weighted model of need. Officers conceded that any restructuring of the library service would prove to be disadvantageous to some user groups, but it was considered that the Council would still be offering a fair and accessible library service. Members of the Scrutiny Panel concluded that judgements were made and hierarchies of need applied to every service delivered through the Council and that it must be achievable to construct a hierarchy of need which satisfied the majority of residents.

6.28 The Scrutiny Panel sought confirmation that the Extended Schools Programme (ESP) was recognised as having an integral role to play, in tandem with libraries provision, in supporting children’s and young peoples academic progression. Members remained unclear, however, as to how the ESP in the borough did fit with the delivery of a remodelled Library and Information Service. Specific questions arose in relation to how the ESP would be used in supporting children and young people to gain access to ICT and suitable environments away from the home setting so as to undertake homework out of school hours. The Scrutiny Panel agreed that there was insufficient reference made in the consultation proposals to the ESP and that there was insufficient evidence in the Cabinet report explaining how the ESP would be made integral to supporting the proposals for delivering revised library services in the borough.

6.29 With regard to Wood Street library, the Scrutiny Panel noted that the building required a £1.2M refurbishment and questioned why consideration was being given to the closure of Harrow Green and South Chingford libraries in light of this fact. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that a number of criteria were used to arrive at the restructuring proposals for the Library and Information Service and that building condition was one criterion. The consultation proposals reflected the full range of criteria having been applied. Scrutiny Members were further advised that the overall distribution of libraries through the borough had to be
taken into consideration; for example, a library in the Chingford area was assessed as serving 34,000 people, Walthamstow 29,500, Leyton/Leytonstone 29,000. If Wood Street library was to be removed from the Walthamstow cluster of libraries, the ratio would change to one library for every 44,000 residents. The Portfolio holder was therefore of the opinion that the libraries model proposed preserved the balance of accessibility sufficiently.

EQUALITIES, DEPRIVATION, POPULATION DENSITY, USER PROFILES

6.30 The Scrutiny Panel raised concerns with regard to the assumptions made in the Cabinet report concerning population density versus distance to travel to a library site. In the Scrutiny Panel’s view, this matter raised issues of multiple levels of deprivation in certain parts of the borough. The Scrutiny Panel asked for further evidence that population density did not necessarily reflect levels of deprivation within the borough as referenced in the original report to Cabinet.

6.31 Officers advised the Scrutiny Panel that the information detailed in the Needs Assessment and previously made available largely answered the questions pertaining to this subject. Scrutiny Members sought clarification, however, as to what measure or benchmark was used when looking at population density specific to Waltham Forest. Members were informed that sources referenced were provided internal to the Council and that references had been taken from the Mayhew report and from the Local Government Association data sources relating to Waltham Forest. Demographics and age profile had been used and detailed in the Cabinet report and data relating to library usage (and comparator information with other London boroughs) had been taken from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) sources.

6.32 The Scrutiny Panel queried whether the demographic information projected forwards in respect of population growth, future demands for new schools/school places within the borough, and how these factors would impact on future library usage and demand. Members were informed that information relating to older age groups was available up to 2014/15. The draft Development Plan would reflect how the library service would be developed to meet future demand.

HARROW GREEN LIBRARY

6.33 Harrow Green library is structured over three levels (Ground: theatre, stage, dressing rooms, storage; 1st Floor: adult library, pc’s, book stock, staff rooms; 2nd Floor: meeting room, office, 2 private rooms). The Scrutiny Panel took evidence from representative of the Acacia Children’s Centre (ACC), which used approximately a quarter of the library space available to deliver a range of its services. The ACC viewed the library as a centrally located venue for local residents and consequently provided good accessibility for all users. The catchment area was predominantly the Cann Hall and Cathall wards. The ACC provided arrange of support services for Mother’s with babies / pre-school children, a Job Seekers Club, Baby Health Clinics, Childminder drop in sessions and confidential counselling services.

6.34 The Scrutiny Panel was advised that the Children’s Centre had not enquired about alternative accommodation at this stage (in the event Harrow Green library is closed). Members were advised that the Children’s Centre did not
wish to move any of its service provision from the Harrow Green library site and that there would be some financial uncertainty arising for the service if this was to transpire. The Scrutiny Panel was informed that Ofsted rated the Children’s Centre as providing good services and that the closure of the library would be a massive loss for the children’s centre.

6.35 The ACC representative stated that she believed that the services provided by the ACC were an asset to the Harrow Green Library and its users. There were some discrete services provided to clients and there were services which had a symbiotic relationship with the library (for example, the baby health clinic service and toddler opportunity support group. The ACC was viewed as central to supporting the inclusion agenda, with the centre producing monthly data and quarterly profiles on its service users. Data on user groups was reviewed monthly and services were tailored towards hard to reach families. The ACC was undertaking more outreach work, and using its budget to support outreach work, in an attempt to bring families back to accessing universal services. The Scrutiny Panel was advised that with regard to whether a community led library could provide the necessary support and facilities required of the Children’s Centre, the ACC would not be best placed to support any such service provision.

6.36 A representative from the Save Harrow Green library campaign felt that there was sufficient under utilised space within the library that could be rented to other local community groups or other interested organisations. It was also suggested that other Council services and Council staff could be located within the library.

6.37 The Scrutiny Panel was informed that the ACC was not charged for its use of the library space at Harrow Green. It was noted that Harrow Green Library was well located and accessible for local residents and was considered by the ACC representative to be the most suitable site available (the Epicentre was considered too expensive). It was further noted that South Leytonstone was an area of high deprivation and that to have some form of educational service located in the area would be beneficial for its children and younger people.
7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Through the five Library & Information Services Review Scrutiny Panel meetings convened, Scrutiny Members identified 19 recommendations, which in their opinion if implemented would support the continued provision of an expansive Library and Information Service, whilst negating the requirement for the closure of any existing library sites within the borough.

7.2 Members of the Scrutiny Panel noted that the Cabinet report left many questions unanswered and while it contained a great deal of information, it was not always the right information. The information frequently did not allow Scrutiny or Cabinet to build a picture of library usage over a period of time, thereby making it difficult to reach balanced, fully allocated, conclusions. It was felt the report did not bridge the gap between officers who had the information and Members who did not. In short, it did not do a complete job.

8. Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

8.1 Not to proceed with any final decisions in relation to library provision before the Scrutiny Panel’s questions pertaining to anticipated costs involved in supporting the opening times across the proposed Library Plus and Library Local sites have been clarified in detail,

8.2 Clarify for the public record what alternative service delivery models were considered for the library service and what those alternatives entailed before any final decisions are made in respect of closure of library sites in the borough

8.3 Confirm that the salary savings information passed to the Scrutiny Panel detailing 18.8 FTE’s as yielding an anticipated saving against salaries of £900,000 is correct

8.4 Reconsider the opening of libraries on Sundays at the proposed Library Plus sites and to give consideration to the closing of all library sites (Plus and Local) on Sunday and Monday; all saved resources arising (operational costs and staffing costs) saved through Sunday/Monday closures to be redirected towards Chingford and Harrow Green libraries in order to provide some form of continuing library provision;

8.5 Agree that each libraries opening hours are further reviewed in light of their catchment area and the overriding needs and specific priorities of local residents;

8.6 Undertake a review of recharge arrangements currently in place for each library in respect of hire of library space to community and voluntary groups and to clarify whether an overarching charging policy is in place and that suitable market rents are in place for the use of all library space and facilities;
8.7 Set a realistic market rate for the use of space at Harrow Green Library as a matter of urgency, which would contribute towards the required efficiencies expected of Harrow Green Library,

8.8 Consider relocating Council staff into space currently available in Harrow Green Library;

8.9 Clarify what budget/s are supporting the current health and midwifery services located at Harrow Green Library and proactively explore the potential for recharging partners for use of Harrow Green Library to deliver these services;

8.10 Revisit the issue of accessibility for young people in light of gang postcode issues and the subsequent consequence for young people in the event that South Chingford and Harrow Green Libraries are closed;

8.11 Ensure that the Extended Schools Programme is made integral to the continuing provision and access to learning resources for school children and young people and that the ESP is fully integrated with the future library provision across the borough.

8.12 Undertake a budget setting review for the library and information service as a matter of urgency to ensure that future annual budgets supporting the service are realistic and reflect the fiscal requirements for providing the service;

8.13 Undertake a review of the salaries and grading structure in respect of the libraries and information service;

8.14 Clarify how the 1M efficiencies will be delivered through the current proposals for the library and information services i.e. a comprehensive breakdown by each library site with regard to staffing and facilities management costs;

8.15 Ensure that the final report to Cabinet will detail comprehensive implications for residents in each affected library location with regard to ethnicity, disability, faith and age and clarify for Cabinet as to how the index of multiple deprivation 2010 has been applied in creating the original report;

8.16 Clarify the additional costs involved in supporting the extra opening hours for the proposed Library Plus sites and the level of savings achievable if Sunday and Monday closing across all library sites was to be implemented.

8.17 That an overarching contractual review of the libraries contract services arrangements e.g. cleaning services, be undertaken as a matter of priority to review contract rates and to initiate new contract letting / contract renegotiation wherever feasible to do so.

8.18 That the Children’s library located in Harrow Green library is moved to the first floor and that the ground floor hall is proactively marketed as an available let to external organisations.
8.19 Agree a corporate policy not to undertake any significant public consultation exercises in future during the summer recess period (i.e. school holiday period), except in cases of exceptional circumstance.