

## 6. SUPPLEMENTARY - LIBRARY HOURS OF OPERATION

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The purpose of this report is to outline proposed changes to hours of operation for libraries and to advise on the additional costs and benefits of these changes.

At its meeting of 27 November 2003, the Arts Culture and Heritage Committee received a deputation from Janet Begg requesting the Council give consideration to increasing the opening hours of the Shirley Library. As a result the Committee decided that *"the Christchurch Libraries Manager be asked to investigate extended opening hours at the Shirley Public Library and refer the funding issues involved with this to the Annual Plan Working Party"*.

It is not appropriate to consider extended hours for Shirley Library in isolation and this report therefore covers the total network and makes recommendations for extended hours at several libraries.

### BACKGROUND

Christchurch City Libraries comprises a Central City Library and 12 community libraries. The hours of opening vary from library to library and have grown up over years based on practice and custom as follows:

- The late night/or nights of the nearby shopping centre,
- The hours of the libraries prior to amalgamation,
- Introduction of Sunday hours in Central (9 November 1997),
- Changed hours when a new library service opens - or when a library moves to a new building,
- Aligning hours with a combined library and service centre,
- Introduction of Saturday mornings in community libraries that did not have them previously.

Over time the hours of opening have increased both as a result of extending hours at individual libraries and by opening brand new service points.

The increased hours of opening have been funded in various ways:

- New libraries are funded by the long term operating projections for bringing in a new or redeveloped services,
- Central's Sunday hours were funded by a successful bid for additional funds,
- Costs of earlier opening hours to align with council services were absorbed into regular budgets,
- Saturday opening has been a mixture of absorbing costs and gaining additional funding.

### REASONS FOR EXTENDING HOURS OF OPENING

There are a number of reasons why we are recommending extending and/or changing hours of opening at selected libraries:

- Customer expectation - particularly that library's opening time in the weekday will correspond to shopping hours, ie 9am opening and that more hours are available at weekends.
- Changing life/work patterns - other services open weekends.
- Maximising investment in buildings and infrastructure.
- Library's Strategic Plan and the "Library +" goal.
- Equity of access across the city.
- Relationship/alignment with retail sector.
- Volume of business, particularly at some libraries.

### VOLUME OF BUSINESS

The volume of business in libraries has not reduced as a result of more information being available electronically. Issue trends over time have continued to grow as follows:

Year to 30 June 1991	Year to 30 June 1996	Year to 30 June 2001	Year to 30 June 2003
3,931,604	4,920,067	5,491,956	5,500,341

Foot traffic has only been available since 2002. In 2002/03 there were 3,410,000 visits to libraries which was a 5.17% increase on the previous year. The new South Library with its extended hours of opening and additional services have become the busiest community library in terms of visitor numbers in its first four full months of operation and the second busiest for items borrowed. Libraries continue to be the single most used Council facility.

### Desired Outcomes for Changing Hours of Operation

- Consistent approach to opening and closing time to avoid customer confusion,
- Spread of longer weekend hours across the city,
- Hours of opening consistent with local facilities, eg malls, shops etc,
- Hours of opening consistent with other services in the same building, eg cafes, council services,
- Libraries with a wider range of services and volume of business open longer hours.

### Proposed Hours of Operation

Given these factors we believe the following changed weekday hours at Central Library and some community libraries and increased weekend hours at Central Library and selected community libraries offer the most consistent service across the city. The proposed hours are:

Library	Weekdays	Saturday	Sunday	Added hrs/wk	Notes
Central	9am-9pm	10am-4pm	10am-4pm	8	Additional five hours weekdays, opening 9am instead of 10am and three hours on Sunday.
Fendalton	9am-7pm	10am-4pm	10am-4pm	4	Reduction of five hours weekdays, closing 7pm instead of 8pm; increase of three hours on Saturday and six hours on Sunday
South	9am-7pm	10am-4pm	10am-4pm	0	No change
New Brighton	9am-6pm	10am-4pm	10am-4pm	0	No change
Shirley	9am-6pm	10am-4pm	10am-4pm	9	Increase Monday - Wednesday, Friday from 5.30pm to 6pm and reduction of late night Thursday from 8pm to 6pm. Increase of three hours on Saturday and six hours on Sunday
Papanui	9am-6pm	10am-4pm		3	Increase Monday - Wednesday, Friday from 5.30pm to 6pm and reduction of late night Thursday from 8pm to 6pm. Increase of three hours on Saturday.
Linwood	9am-6pm	10am-4pm		6	Increase Monday - Friday from 10am to 9am and reduction of late night Thursday from 8pm to 6pm. Increase of three hours on Saturday.
Bishopdale	9am-6pm	10am-1pm		3.5	Increase Monday - Friday from 9.30am to 9am. Increase Monday - Wednesday, Friday 5.30pm to 6pm and reduction on Thursday from 7pm to 6pm.
Hornby	9am-6pm	10am-1pm		2.5	Increase Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 5.30pm to 6pm; reduction Tuesday, Thursday from 8pm to 6pm.; increase Monday - Friday from 10am to 9am. Saturday change from 9am-12noon.
Spreydon	10am-6pm	10am-1pm		-2	Reduction in Thursday from 8pm to 6pm.
Halswell	10am-6pm	10am-1pm		0	Increase Monday - Thursday from 5.30pm to 6pm; reduction Friday from 8pm to 6pm.
Redwood	10am-6pm	10am-1pm		0	No change
Sumner	10am-6pm	10am-1pm		4.5	Increase Monday - Friday from 10.30am to 10am and Monday - Wednesday, Friday from 5pm to 6pm. Reduction Thursday from 8pm to 6pm.
<b>Total additional hours per week</b>				<b>38.5</b>	<b>Increased by 6% from 641.5 to 680 per week</b>

If we apply these hours of opening there is an increase in weekday hours of 11.5, Saturday hours of 12 hours and Sunday 15 hours per week.

### Benefits of the Changed Hours

The proposal is applying a much more consistent approach to hours of closing than is currently the case. At present six of the 12 community libraries have one late night, one has two late nights, one opens to 8pm each night, one opens to 7pm on one night, one opens to 7pm each night, and two have no late nights at all, closing at 6pm each night.

Although we have yet to seek customer feedback on closing earlier on the late nights, we believe that any loss of availability of one to two hours an evening is offset by the earlier opening and the extended Saturday and Sunday hours. Central Library would still be open Monday to Friday until 9pm and two other libraries - one in the northwest of the city and the other in the South of the city would be open every weekday until 7pm.

Morning opening times are also more consistent under this proposal. Over the past few years we have been able to open five community libraries at 9am instead of 10am to be more consistent with shopping hours and to fit in with the service centre hours where libraries and the Council have been co-located. Bishopdale was able to open half an hour earlier and currently opens at 9.30am. Of the remaining seven libraries, six (including Central Library) open at 10am and Sumner opens at 10.30am. This time of opening does not fit with shopping patterns, and is a really old fashioned approach to service. We are therefore proposing that the larger libraries should all open at 9am and the smaller libraries, both by size and volume of business remain with opening times of 10am. We propose bringing Sumner into line with the small libraries and also opening it at 10am.

Return on investment is also a consideration for opening longer during the week days. The more use we can extract from the capital investment in buildings and facilities, the greater the return on the investment in terms of social and educational benefit.

### **Cost of Increased Hours**

The only additional costs incurred in opening earlier during week days are staff time to serve customers. Apart from Sumner Library all the buildings are occupied currently from at least 9am onwards and heating and ventilating systems are already in operation by this time. At the weekend, although some buildings will be open longer hours the costs of heating and ventilating for these hours is partially offset by the buildings retaining heat longer and not requiring an additional boost on Monday morning to bring the building up to heat.

Over the past nine months, the Libraries and Information Unit has been undergoing an extensive review of its use of time, using a methodology established by Brisbane City Libraries (a library system serving 800,000+ population). This has allowed us to review the way we work and it would now be possible to open in the Central Library at the earlier time within existing salary budgets. The tasks formerly undertaken between 9am and 10am would be spread throughout the day. The earlier opening hours during the week at community libraries can only be achieved if we can reduce the late nights as proposed above.

To open longer at weekend hours, however, will require additional funds as follows:

• Three additional hours on Sunday for Central	\$89,000
• Three additional hours on Saturday for four Community Libraries	\$64,000
• Six additional hours on Sunday for two Community Libraries	\$87,000
• TOTAL ADDITIONAL COST	\$240,000

This represents a 1% increase in total expenditure for a 6% increase in hours of operation for customers.

### **CONSULTATION WITH CUSTOMERS**

A survey with Central Library customers was conducted during December 2003 to determine preferences for weekday and weekend hours.

No consultation has been undertaken with users outside the library to determine their requirements. 39% of those surveyed wanted the library to open at 9am giving reasons such as:

- *"All the shops are open at 9, inconvenient to open at 10"*
- *"As a teacher would be handy to bring class groups in earlier rather than having to wait until 10"*
- *"If you come before 10 there is a big crowd waiting at the door"*

50% of those surveyed wanted longer hours at Central on Sunday, with 29% wanting the hours extended to 10am to 5pm on both days giving such reasons as:

- *"4pm is too early to close in the weekends"*
- *"Only able to come to library on weekend so would greatly benefit from extended hours on a Sunday"*
- *"Same hours both days simpler"*

No consultation has been done with community library customers to gauge a move away from the one late night concept to a more uniform closing time of 6pm (or 7pm in the case of one library). It is intended that consultation would take place during the draft annual plan time so that feedback from customers would be available when the Council was considering submissions on the annual plan in June 2004.

Whilst the week day hours in community libraries could be put in place without changes to the Saturday and Sunday hours we believe the loss of evenings would be more acceptable to customers where there is an increase in weekend hours to compensate.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Changes to hours of operation for Fendalton will require a notified resource consent as the current consent applies only to the hours Fendalton is currently open. Any changes to hours at Fendalton are therefore dependant on the outcome of the consent process.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This proposal results in a more uniform and logical approach to hours of operation. It increases the hours of opening by 6% for a 1% increase on total expenditure. The hours of operation provide best value for customers and ensures maximum use of the infrastructure of facilities that the Council provides.

#### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the information be referred for consideration to the Annual Plan Subcommittee.