

OPTIONS FOR DARLINGTON LIBRARY SERVICE: ANNEX B

Proposed Closure of Cockerton Library Impact Assessment Report

1. Background

In the 2011-15 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that was approved by Council in March 2011 a commitment was made to realise savings within the Library Service budget of £130k per annum by 2011-12 and £250k per annum by 2012-13. A Transformational Review of the service has been completed and delivered £242k of these savings through management and operational staffing consolidation.

In the 2011-15 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that was approved by Cabinet in November 2011 it was recommended that subject to further work on the impact of closing Cockerton Library, an additional £100k saving on the Library Service budget was to be made by April 2013. This would leave the authority with one static library, Crown Street, and the Mobile Library.

This report considers how the closure of Cockerton Library will impact upon members of the local community.

2. Cockerton Library information

Cockerton Library is a universal service that can be used by all members of the public but is particularly focused on meeting the need of individuals who live within the boundaries of Darlington Borough.

The Library opens for 50 hours per week at the following times:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---|-----------|
| Monday, Tuesday, Friday | 09.00 a.m. | - | 7.00 p.m. |
| Wednesday | 09.00 a.m. | - | 1.00 p.m. |
| Thursday | 10.00 a.m. | - | 7.00 p.m. |
| Saturday | 09.00 a.m. | - | 4.00 p.m. |

4753 members of the public used Cockerton library in 2011 for lending or PC usage and 2095 of these individuals did not use any other library in the Borough for these purposes. In 2010/11 book issues from Cockerton library accounted for 25% of all library issues in Darlington.

The age and gender of users of Cockerton Library only is as follows:

Table 1

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| Under 18 | 1089 | (37.5%) | Male | 1024 | (35.2%) |
| Adult | 932 | (32.1%) | Female | 1778 | (61.2%) |
| Over 60s | 772 | (26.6%) | Not recorded | 103 | (3.5%) |
| Other | 112 | (3.9%) | Total | 2905 | |
| Total | 2905 | | | | |

Figure 1 details the number of users of Cockerton Library only, by Council Ward. As you would expect the highest number of users come from nearby Wards, Cockerton East, Mowden, Cockerton West, Pierremont and Faverdale, (accounting for 60.7 % of all users¹)

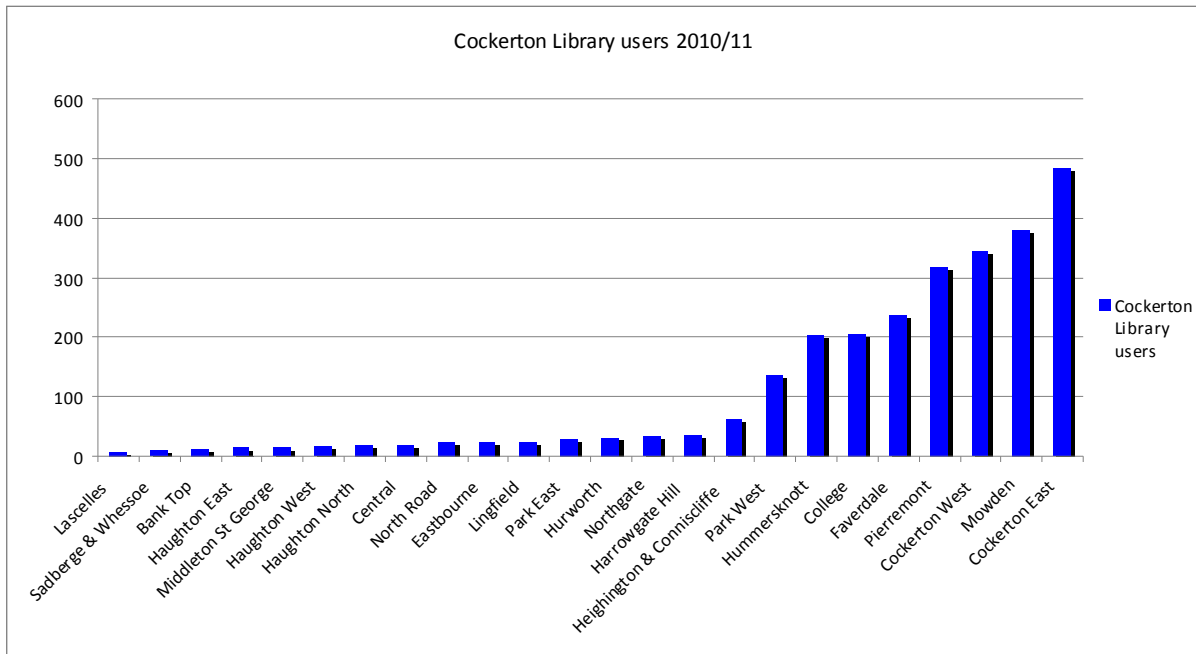


Figure 1

Cockerton library provides 10 PC work stations for use by the public, figure 2 details the number of users PC's by ward at Cockerton Library. 39 % of users live in Pierremont, Cockerton West and Cockerton East.

¹ Library Users are classed as registered Member of the Library Service who have used the service within the past year

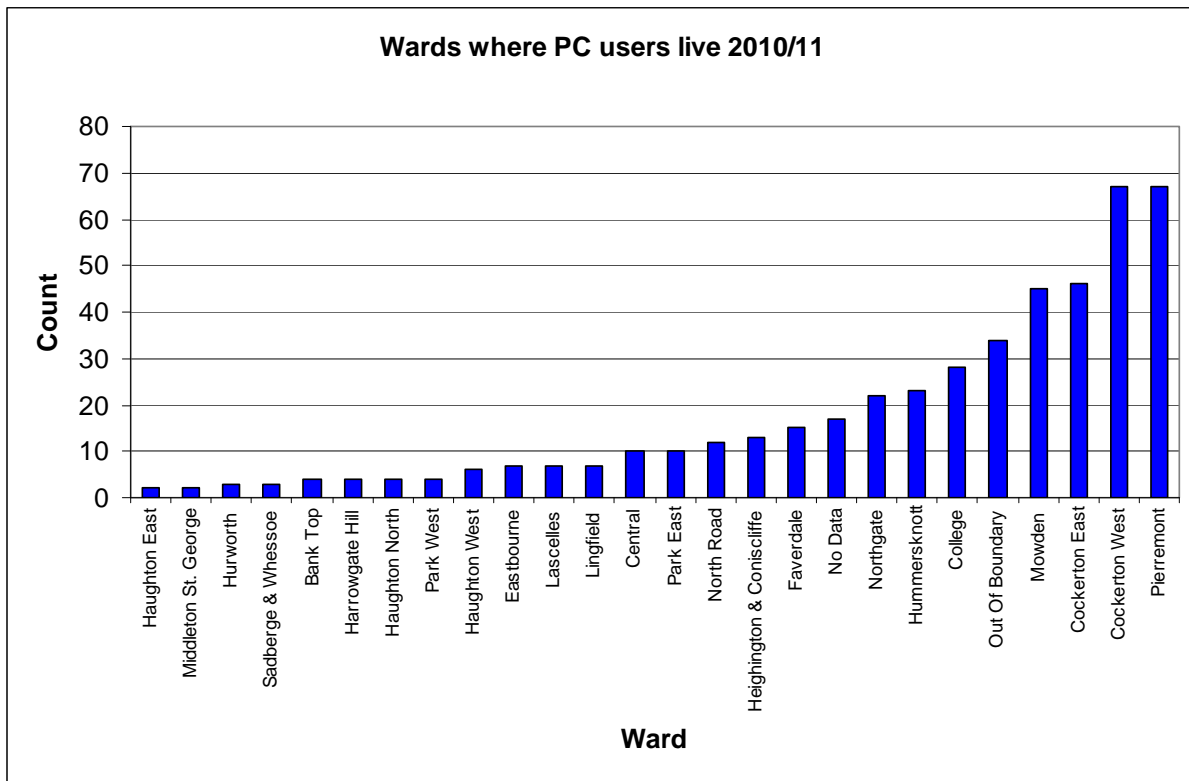


Figure 2

3. Staff at Cockerton Library

Following the Transformational Review Cockerton Library will operate on the basis of one full time Senior Library Officer and three part-time library officers. All officers are female and of White British ethnicity.

4. Evidence and data used for the assessment

Library Database

The library database provides age, gender and addresses for all library members and active users. For the purpose of this impact assessment the focus has been on the 4753 Cockerton library users in the last year and particularly the 2905 that have not used any other library service in Darlington during 2011.

Library Survey

Between November 2010 and February 2011 the Authority completed a detailed consultation exercise which resulted in nearly 4000 responses to a survey. The survey focused on identifying who used the service, what services were used and how people felt about the services that were provided. For the purpose of this impact assessment the focus has been on the answers given by the 1652 respondents who indicated that they used Cockerton Library.

Comments box and letters

Comments box placed in variety of locations, including Cockerton Library, have been monitored and comments on Cockerton Library have been analysed and grouped into themes and actions, see Figure 3 and 4 and table 2.

Targeted impact assessment work

Targeted impact assessment work has been completed with a number of key groups identified as being potentially impacted by Cockerton Library’s closure.

Key groups contacted include:

- 48 businesses located within the Cockerton Village area
- 60 attendees at mother and toddler sessions provided by Cockerton Library
- 900 children in local schools who regularly visit Cockerton Library
- One to one sessions completed during three two hour sessions during January 2012 by the Communities Team at Cockerton Library
- Local community partnerships based in the Cockerton area
- 50 Members of the Cockerton Working Men’s Club.

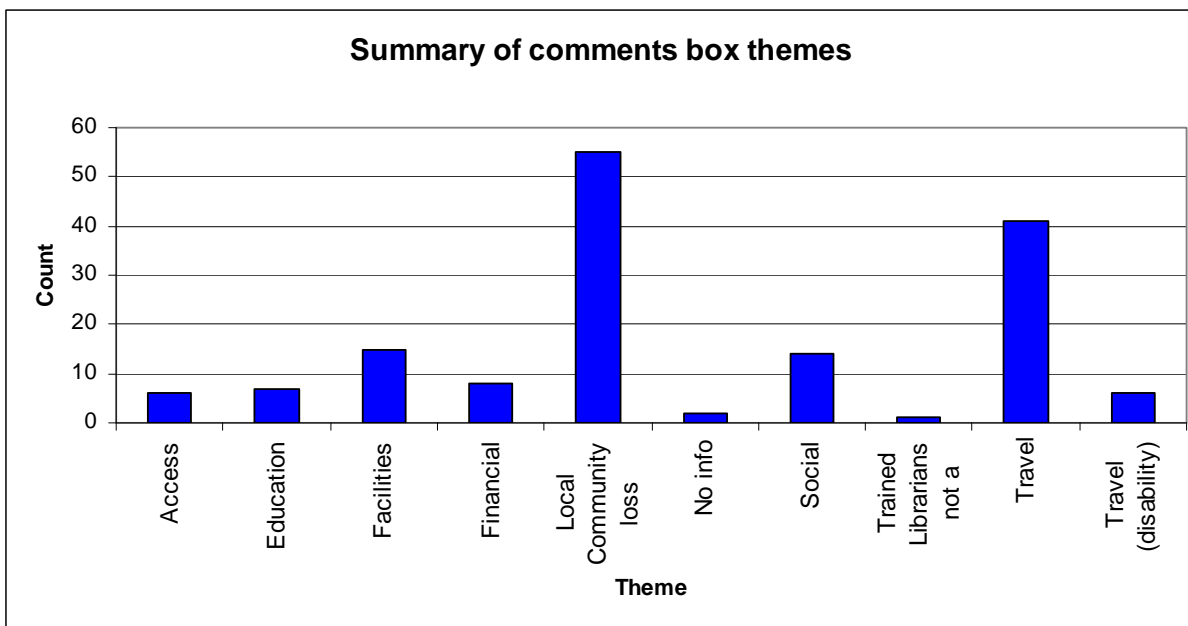


Figure 3

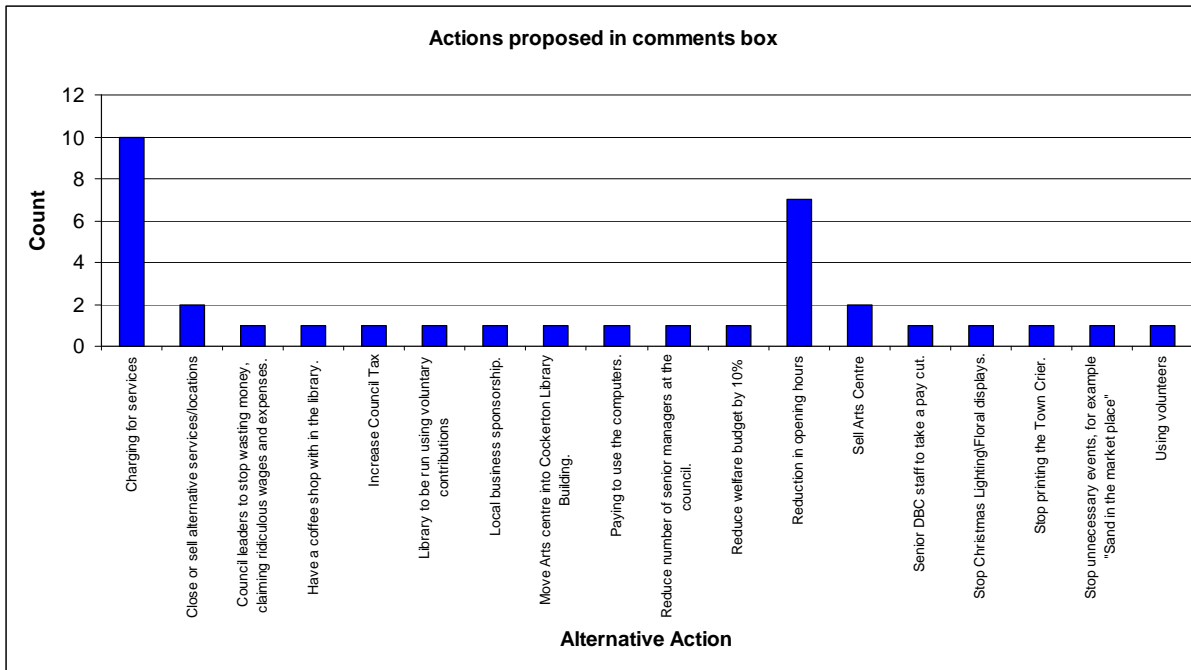


Figure 4

able 2 – Summary of proposed actions.

| Actions proposed in Comments Box | Count |
|---|--------------|
| Charging for services | 10 |
| Close or sell alternative services/locations | 2 |
| Council leaders to stop wasting money, claiming wages and expenses. | 1 |
| Have a coffee shop with in the library. | 1 |
| Increase Council Tax | 1 |
| Library to be run using voluntary contributions | 1 |
| Local business sponsorship. | 1 |
| Move Arts centre into Cockerton Library Building. | 1 |
| Paying to use the computers. | 1 |
| Reduce number of senior managers at the council. | 1 |
| Reduce welfare budget by 10% | 1 |
| Reduction in opening hours | 7 |
| Sell Arts Centre | 2 |
| Senior DBC staff to take a pay cut. | 1 |
| Stop Christmas Lighting/Floral displays. | 1 |
| Stop printing the Town Crier. | 1 |
| Stop unnecessary events, for example "Sand in the market place" | 1 |
| Using volunteers | 1 |
| TOTAL | 35 |

5. Negative or unequal outcomes identified from impact assessment work

Completing the impact assessment work has identified that a number of groups will be impacted more significantly than the general population. Outlined below is a description of impacts each group will experience as a result of Cockerton Library's closure.

Disability

Of the 94 people who completed the impact assessment forms 24 identified themselves as disabled. All of these individuals identified that they would have great difficulty in accessing and using the town centre library, Crown Street. The reasons identified were as follows:

- Cockerton has free parking within grounds of the library and DDA compliant access. Crown Street Library does not have free parking within the grounds of the library but does have a DDA compliant access point. The distance between the library's DDA access point and the nearest paid public car park is 18 meters.
- There are three direct bus routes between Cockerton Village and Crown Street Library and each occur every 30 minutes between 8am and 6pm. Each of these bus routes operate with easy access busses and stop directly outside Crown Street Library.

24 of the impact assessment respondents indicated that while Crown Street is DDA compliant and there is parking and near by bus stops, increased difficulty in accessing the library would mean they would no longer use any static library. Personal impacts highlighted included 'mental depression', 'loss of independence', 'reduced social well-being', 'isolation' and 'less social interaction'.

Age (frail and mothers with toddlers)

Table 1 (page 1) shows that the Under 18 age range will be the largest group affected by Cockerton's closure. The explanation for the high usage level among this age range is that all the schools local to Cockerton Library (Cockerton Primary School, Holy Family Primary School and Mount Pleasant Primary School) have a programme of regular visits to the Library.

Under 17

Of the 94 impact assessments completed 3 were identified as being completed by those under the age of 17. A further 22 impact assessment returns highlight how Cockerton's closure would affect children and young people within the care of the respondent. 20 of the 22 respondents indicated the closure of Cockerton Library would mean they could no longer access any static library due to the cost and difficulty of accessing Crown Street Library. Impacts of Cockerton's closure on under 18's included 'unable to get my grandchildren to town so will miss out on library access, 'less likely to read books', 'won't be able to take directly and won't have access through school visits', 'loss of study location for teenager at college' and 'no longer have access to a PC'.

Adults (17-64)

The majority of adult respondents to the impact assessments focused on the impact on children and young people within their care. The impacts outlined by these individuals are outlined above.

10 adults identified that the closure of Cockerton and shorter evening opening hours at Crown Street would mean they would no longer be able to access a static library service.

65 and over

Of the 94 impact assessments completed 33 were completed by those aged 65 or over. As 20 of these individuals also identified themselves as having a disability the impacts of closing Cockerton are very similar to those identified earlier.

Of the 13 who did not identify themselves as having a disability 10 felt they would not be able to access Crown Street library due to their physical condition and the difficulty they would have in carry heavy books. The impacts for these individuals include 'loss of social exchange', 'do less walking', 'less mental stimulation' and 'affect mental health'.

Deprivation (wards most effected/cost of travel)

Of the 94 impact assessments completed 14 individuals specifically expressed concerns that they would not be able to afford Crown Street Library or to purchase books. These individuals were exclusively from the 35-44 or over 75 age range and from the more disadvantaged wards. A further 49 individuals indicated that they would struggle to afford or have the time to access Crown Street Library.

The library service's database indicated that 2095 individuals used only Cockerton Library in 2011 and 344 of these users come from the Cockerton West ward, the second most deprived ward in Darlington, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. While only having the third highest usage of Cockerton Library service overall, Cockerton West has the joint highest number of library users (67) who access the library for PC usage only. This suggests that a notable number of individuals in one of the most deprived areas of Darlington use Cockerton Library for free access to a PC and the internet.

Race

The overwhelming majority of new library members do not answer ethnicity questions on the membership form. As a result of this, 96.9% of registered users do not have their ethnicity stated or their stated ethnicity does not fit within the prescribed headings.

All 94 impact assessment forms were completed by individuals who identified themselves and White British.

Gender

Of the 94 impact assessments completed 54 were completed by females, 27 by males and 13 did not disclose a gender. 20 females identified that Cockerton's closure would mean they would no longer take their children to a library. Crown Street library was not considered a viable option for a range of reasons including; 'cost of travelling to town' and 'poor accessibility of Crown Street Library'. There impact of no longer being able to access a library included comments such as 'not able to access a pc and home work support – education will suffer'.

Local businesses

Using the Business Engagement teams database 48 businesses were identified as being based within the Cockerton village area and so potentially affected by Cockerton Library's closure. Of the 48 businesses directly contacted by the Council, two responded with one anticipating the closure of Cockerton Library would significantly affect trade and the other anticipating the closure would have no impact on trade. Friends of Cockerton Library have collected 36 signatures from local businesses in support of keeping the Library open.

General comments from 'wider' budget consultation

There has been an opportunity to comment on budget proposals through Talking Together events, by phone, email or by letter, 12 comments have been submitted through these channels.

Impacts mentioned focus on difficulty accessing a library should Cockerton close and on the value of the Library to the local community in Cockerton, typically comments include:

'I'm disabled and I've spoke to other older people - we rely on Cockerton Library. The mobile library isn't convenient. For me to get into the town would be practically impossible'

'I am most disappointed to hear of the proposal to close the above, I'm sure everyone recognises the need to save money in the present climate, however, this to say the least appears somewhat of a drastic step. If the library does close it is more than a safe bet that it will not open again even in happier times. Can I ask you therefore to reconsider your proposals, perhaps the library could open only open two days a week thereby reducing costs but still offering the facility to cockerton resident and beyond, also a 50 pence per book charge could also offset the cost'.

6. Conclusions resulting from impact assessment work

It is clear from the impact assessment work and the recent needs assessment work that the closure of Cockerton Library will impact a number of vulnerable groups disproportionately. Key impacts are outlined as follows:

- Under 17's have the highest usage levels of Cockerton Library largely due to the regular visits from three local primary schools and 91% of families indicated that they would no longer use the library service if Cockerton Library closed.
- People with disabilities and those aged 65 and over highlighted that Cockerton Library has free parking within its grounds and indicated they would not be able to using Crown Library due to the difficulty in accessing the town centre library. Impacts of being no longer able to use the library service centred on impacts to independence and mental health.
- Members of the Cockerton West ward, one of the most deprived wards in Darlington, have the second highest usage of Cockerton Library and joint highest number of users who only access the library for access to a PC. Closure of Cockerton Library will reduce access to a valuable information resource.

Based on the needs assessment and impact assessment work completed an alternative proposal, to keep Cockerton Library Open, though with reduced opening hours is being considered.

In the proposal the opening hours would be:

| Day | Open | Hours |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Monday | 9.00AM - 2.00PM | 5 |
| Tuesday | 2.00PM - 7.00PM | 5 |
| Wednesday | 9.00AM - 1.00PM | 4 |
| Thursday | 2.00PM - 7.00PM | 5 |
| Friday | 9.00AM - 2.00PM | 5 |

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Saturday | 9.00AM - 1.00PM | 4 |
| Totals | | 28 |

These opening times have been selected so as to maximise opportunities for the people most reliant on Cockerton Library to continue to access the Library Service across a range of operating times, six days per week.