

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Covid-19 Library service: temporary closures to support mass testing programme
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Viddy Persaud
SLT Lead:	Jane West
Report Author and contact details:	Gareth Nicholson, AD Customer, Culture, Communications Gareth.nicholson@havering.gov.uk
Financial summary:	
Reason decision is Key	<i>(c) Significant effect on two or more Wards</i>
Date notice given of intended decision:	<u>Urgent</u>
Relevant OSC:	
Is it an urgent decision?	Yes
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	Yes in view of the need to support the immediate roll out of mass testing

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	[X]
Places making Havering	[]
Opportunities making Havering	[]
Connections making Havering	[]

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

1.1 This executive decision is to suspend services at five Havering libraries – Collier Row, Elm Park, Gidea Park, Harold Wood and South Hornchurch – to allow those sites to deliver mass lateral flow testing as part of the Tier 3 restrictions that are imminent.

1.2 A decision on the above would have the effect of freeing up libraries staff to support expanded service at the Borough's five other libraries – Harold Hill, Hornchurch, Rainham, Romford and Upminster.

Regulations and Government guidance and Covid-19 in Havering

2.1 Havering was included in Tier 3 of the Covid restrictions on Monday 14 December with the new restrictions coming in to force on Wednesday 16th December. As part of that tiering, the Council will obtain further support to deliver mass testing.

2.2 The library sites above have been identified because they are conveniently located within communities, are already in council control and meet space and function requirements for testing sites.

2.3 However, the requirements and practicalities of delivering mass testing at these sites makes it unfeasible to continue to deliver library services from them, Books, shelving and computer equipment may need to be stored away or moved to facilitate the space required to run the testing sites and continuing a service at those sites is likely to be confusing for residents. Similarly access to the sites for library staff may be restricted and would at the very least require a reviewed health and safety assessment.

Current library operations

3.1 The current service is only available on a booked "click and collect" basis, where residents needing to return or collect a title or access PCs can only do so by making an advance booking and arriving at a pre-arranged time.

3.2 Library staff are working as a Covid measure in "bubbles" – pairs of libraries where staff will work across both libraries rather than covering across the estate as would be normal practice.

3.3 Subject to decision, library staff would fulfil pre-booked click and collect orders at the branch libraries for the remainder of this week, but the service will only be available at the five larger libraries from w/c 21 December.

Expanded service at five larger libraries

4.1 Subject to decision, library staff working at the sites being used for mass testing will be asked to work at the larger libraries in their bubble, meaning more appointments at these sites can be facilitated.

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4.2 After the Christmas break, the five larger libraries will operate six days a week.

Recommendation

1. Authority to suspend services at five Havering libraries – Collier Row, Elm Park, Gidea Park, Harold Wood and South Hornchurch, to allow those sites to deliver mass lateral flow testing as part of the Tier 3 restrictions that are imminent.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

2.4 Quality of life functions of Cabinet

Leisure and cultural services

(f) To exercise the Council's functions in relation to leisure services, including the formulation and co-ordination of policies and their co-ordination and implementation. Such functions include (but are not limited to) the following: (i) library and information services

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This decision is taken to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Gold strategy for the management of the coronavirus pandemic.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Use alternate sites

Within required timescales no other sites met the requirements needed for sites.

Continue to operate library services at the same locations and times as running mass testing

The requirements of the building to be fully utilised for testing makes it unfeasible for library staff to use the building for fulfilling click and collect orders or facilitating access to public PCs.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Councillor Viddy Persaud

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NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Gareth Nicholson, AD Customer, Culture, Communications

Designation:

Signature: GDN

Date: 15 December 2020

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering like other upper tier authorities has a duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area. The proposal in this decision is to temporarily reduce the locations at which the library service will be available to residents. However that reduction will facilitate the mass roll out of testing for COVID-19 during a time when rates of infection in the Borough are amongst the highest in the UK.

Therefore, this temporary reduction of the locations through which the service will be available to residents is a proportionate response as part of the Council's obligation to help reduce the infection rates within the Borough.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no finance implications associated with this decision.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

Given the Coronavirus outbreak, the paramount consideration of the Council is the health and wellbeing of Members and officers. The proposals contained in this report will directly impact on all staff that work at the affected libraries who will be managed in accordance with the Council's HR and specific Covid-19 related policies and guidance.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

In this emergency situation it will not be possible to complete an equalities impact assessment. Nevertheless, it is recognised that implementing either of the options presented in this report will have an impact on residents including those with protected characteristics. Accordingly for the most restrictive option, mitigation measures are included.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The purpose of this decision is to protect the public and staff from the impact of Coronavirus.

Rates of coronavirus infection in Havering have reached 600/100K of population – amongst the highest in England. There is a risk of significant harm to health and that the NHS locally will be overwhelmed. As a result, the borough, along with London and adjacent areas in the SE of England have been placed under tier 3 / very high alert level restrictions to reduce incidence rates. Experience from the north of England suggest that tier 3 restrictions will reduce rates but only slowly. The Council should work with partners to do all it can to slow and then reverse the spread of coronavirus to reduce the harm to the health of local residents and damage to the local economy. Asymptomatic testing using lateral flow devices is an important part of wider efforts to augment tier 3 restrictions and should be made available quickly and to all parts of the borough.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

Proposal NOT agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____