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For Immediate Release

Press Release

Community to be at the heart of Lambeth Libraries, Commission proposes

Lambeth should invest in new technology and work more closely with the local community in order to create a 21st century library service, under proposals from Lambeth's Library Commission unveiled today.

The proposals, to be considered by the Cabinet next week, will give local people more say in deciding how libraries should be run, and recommend that every part of the borough that currently has access to a library service will keep it.

Cllr Florence Nosegbe, Cabinet Member for Culture, and Chair of the Library Commission, said:

"I'm pleased that the Commission has proposed a model that protects access to the library service in every part of the borough by working more closely with the local community.

"As part of our plan to make Lambeth's Britain's first co-operative council, the final decisions rest with the community - and we'll back the community's decisions.

"Our aim is to increase access, and extend the reach of libraries by making services available at more locations, and get more people using them so that the service is preserved for future generations. Investing in new technology such as ebooks and wifi will expand their appeal but also save money and make the service more flexible.

"I'd like to thank all those who have contributed to the Commission with ideas and energy. We have a golden chance to change the way our libraries operate to make them more relevant and ready for the future."

Lambeth Council's cabinet will next week discuss the report of Lambeth's independent Library Commission, which was set up to recommend how Lambeth's libraries can improve and modernise while making a £750k reduction in the library budget following significant cuts in government grants.

Under the plans, Brixton and Streatham libraries will be open seven days a week fully equipped with the latest IT and a full range of specialist library staff.

West Norwood, Minet, Carnegie, Durning and South Lambeth libraries will all remain open and be developed into 'Community Libraries', run in partnership with the local community who be given the power to decide how they are managed, how budgets are spent, and what services the libraries should provide.

In Clapham a brand new award winning library will open in the New Year, and in Waterloo consideration will be given to whether the library should be moved to a more suitable and permanent building.

The Commissioners recommend that rather than closing libraries, necessary savings will be made by remodelling staff structures, cutting waste, and introducing more self service technology.

The report's proposals will see residents able to access library services at more locations and in more ways than ever before through the use of new technology such as online booksharing.

The Commission proposes to invest in new technologies such as self service check outs and free Wifi, to expand their appeal and increase the amount of users but also save money.

It also proposes the creation of 'Library Access Points' at locations across the borough at schools, community centres or even cafes, where residents can access library services on their way to work or after dropping children at school. Services will also be taken to the doorstep of the most vulnerable.

Editors' notes:

To read the report visit:

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=225&MIId=7646>

Lambeth Council needs to find £94 million of savings over the next four years due to cuts in government funding.

The libraries share of these savings is £750,000 over the next two years.

The Lambeth Libraries Commission was established in May 2011 to develop a vision for the service that would make the required savings of £750,000, while improving the appeal and popularity of libraries among residents. Currently libraries in Lambeth are under used and users report low levels of satisfaction.

It was chaired by Cllr Florence Nosegbe, Cabinet Member for Culture, comprised of nine commissioners and included representatives from Friends Of Lambeth Libraries.

A new award winning 21st library is to open in Clapham in the new year as part of the council's major regeneration project there. The library will open on the High Street in the new Mary Seacole Centre. For more on this project see:

<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/futureclapham>