

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Officer Decision Record

Decision Maker:	John Tickle Assistant Director Culture and Heritage
Date:	November 2014
Title:	Review of reduction in hours, Hampshire Archives and Local Studies
Reference:	6264

Tel: 01962 846000

Email: john.tickle@hants.gov.uk

1. The decision:

- 1.1. Following a year-long trial of reduced Saturday openings – from every Saturday to the first and third Saturdays in the month – that Archives and Local Studies at Hampshire Record Office continues to open to the public on the first and third Saturday of each month (except where it falls on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day or New Year's Day, on which days the office is closed).

2. Reason(s) for the decision:

- 2.1. Opening on Saturdays is valued by some customers but it has been an under-used resource, with on average nearly twice as many people visiting on a weekday as on a Saturday. Ensuring the most effective use of staffing and other resources is particularly important in the context of significantly reducing budgets. A final review of the trial period found Saturday visitor numbers had remained stable and the year's trial of reduced Saturday openings had gained broad acceptance with relatively little negative customer feedback.

3. Other options considered and rejected:

- 3.1. Close on a weekday rather than reducing Saturdays.
Average weekday visitor numbers remain substantially higher than that for Saturdays and there is no single day of the week that has substantially fewer visitors.
- 3.2. Open on alternate Saturdays.
This pattern has potentially more scope for confusion than the pattern of first and third Saturdays, and would be likely to require greater customer reliance on checking published opening times when they wished to visit. This pattern would adversely affect people with a coincidental Saturday working pattern.

- 3.3. Open on the fifth Saturday in months where a fifth Saturday falls, in addition to first and third Saturdays each month.
This would result in sometimes being open two Saturdays in a row, but not at other times, so could cause confusion. It would also entail the allocation of further resources.
- 3.4. Open on first and third Saturdays but for longer hours or for longer hours on our evening opening.
The 9am-4pm Saturday opening times are long established. Any viable lengthening of hours would be relatively minor (likely to be up to one hour) and therefore likely to have a relatively small positive impact on visitors. We previously experimented with a longer evening, by closing an hour later, at 8pm, but as this provision was underused, we reverted to the previous evening closure time of 7pm.
- 3.5. Continue to open every Saturday, but for fewer hours.
For customers for whom Saturday may be the only day they can visit, for visitors coming from a distance, and for those who like to spend a good stretch of time on their research, reducing the number of available hours would be likely to have a negative impact.
- 3.6. Open on one or no Saturday per month.
This option would represent a significant reduction (50%-100%) to our current Saturday offer and would significantly affect those customers who may only be able to visit on a Saturday.

4. Conflicts of interest:

4.1. Not applicable

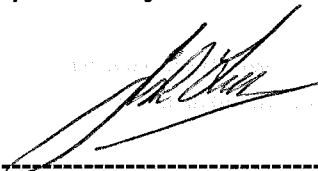
5. Dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service:

5.1 Not applicable

6. Supporting information:

None

Approved by:



John Tickle, Assistant Director Culture and Heritage

Date:

5 November 2014

Archives and Local Studies at Hampshire Record Office: final review of Saturday opening

October 2014

1 Executive Summary

To make more effective use of our resources, a decision was made in October 2013 to reduce Saturday openings from every Saturday to the first and third Saturdays (24 per year) from October 2013 for a trial period of one year, with a final review in October 2014. This final review found the reduced Saturday openings had gained broad acceptance and it is therefore recommended that Hampshire Archives and Local Studies continues to open on the first and third Saturday each month.

2 Introduction

The decision to trial opening on fewer Saturdays followed a review of visitor numbers using our service. In 2012/13, Saturday visitors were, on average, just over half (16) of the average number on weekdays (31). We anticipated that the reduction would mean more visitors on those fewer open Saturdays. This has not happened, though over the trial period average Saturday visitors have remained steady while average weekday visitors have declined (see table below).

Visitor numbers	Weekday visitors	Saturday visitors	Total visitors	Average weekday visitors	Average Saturday visitors
2011/12	9368	996	10364	38	20
2012/13	7517	796	8313	31	16
Apr-Sep 2013	3085	368	3453	30	16.7
Oct 2013-Mar 2014	3622	200	3822	29	16.7
Apr-Sep 2014	3273	208	3481	26	17.3

3 Impacts on protected groups

Consideration of protected groups was made as part of the original review into opening hours. It was expected that the change would have either little or no impact. Since then, there has been no customer feedback relating to protected groups, nor have any equalities issues been raised from any other source.

4 Analysis of customer feedback

Reduced Saturdays was discussed at meetings with members of both Hampshire Archives Trust Executive Committee and Hampshire Record Office's Customer Liaison Group; comments included: the negative impact on those in full-time work particularly those coming from a distance; how important it was to maintain some level of Saturday service; whether consideration had been given to reducing Monday openings instead; and the reduced availability of the county's local studies collection.

There were 21 other comments received over the year's trial: 15 received between October 2013 and March 2014 and six more between April and September 2014. Comments have been summarised as follows:

1. open every Saturday and reduce openings on a weekday (6 items)
2. maintain document retrievals throughout Saturday (4 items)
3. concerns about 2 Saturdays per month not being enough, including concern that we are sometimes closed on 2 consecutive Saturdays (3 items)
4. open for longer on Saturdays or evenings (2 items)
5. accepting of 2 Saturdays per month (2 items)
6. appreciating that there is a Saturday offer (2 items)
7. suggesting opening every Saturday, but fewer hours (1 item)
8. suggesting opening 1 Saturday per month (1 item)

5 Points for consideration

Those points made by the six-month review stage were considered at that time, but since the period April to October is generally the busier half of the year, further consideration was deferred until the end of the trial.

5.1 Customer feedback point 1: Open every Saturday and close on a weekday.

Over the year of the trial, the average number of Saturday visitors has remained stable (17) while the average weekday visitor figure, though lower than in previous years, was considerably higher (27.5) than the Saturday average figure. It remains the case that a relatively small proportion of our visitors both value and use us on Saturdays. Even the quietest weekdays (Monday, Tuesday, and Friday) each claimed an average of 24-25 visitors, so there is no single weekday which has substantially fewer visitors

Recommendation: to continue to offer a reduced number of Saturday openings and retain a full service during the week

5.2 Customer feedback point 2: Maintain document retrievals throughout the day

Managing demand for documents can be a difficult aspect of the Saturday service. On most Saturdays, document demand can be easily managed, but demand is unpredictable (as low as 16, as high as 83, average 42), only a small staff is available, and documents are not currently retrieved throughout the day.

Recommendation: to adopt a flexible approach, retrieving documents throughout the day when it is practicable to do so and employing a variety of pressure-relieving measures and good customer communication to manage periods of high demand.

5.3 Customer feedback point 3: Not enough open Saturdays/ Closed consecutive Saturdays

Consideration was given to:

- Opening on alternate Saturdays. This would mean opening an additional two Saturdays per year and against the existing pattern which could cause confusion and would be likely to require greater customer reliance on checking published opening times when they wished to visit. It would also have an adverse effect on people working a coincidental Saturday working pattern.
- Opening on the fifth Saturday in months where a fifth Saturday falls, in addition to the first and third Saturdays each month. This would mean opening an additional four Saturdays per year and would also result in sometimes being open two Saturdays in a row. It would add to the existing pattern but again could cause confusion. It would also entail the allocation of further resources.

Recommendation: to retain the current (trial period) first and third Saturday openings

5.4 Customer feedback point 4: Open for longer on Saturdays/evenings

The 9am-4pm Saturday opening times are long established. Any viable lengthening of hours would be relatively minor (likely to be up to one hour) and therefore likely to have a relatively small positive impact on visitors. In 2012/13, we experimented with a longer evening by closing an hour later, at 8pm, but as this provision was underused, after a one-year trial we reverted to our usual evening closure time of 7pm.

Recommendation: to retain the existing Saturday (9am-4pm) and Thursday evening (5-7pm) opening times.

5.5 Customer feedback point 7: open every Saturday but fewer hours

A general survey of Record Office visitors in May 2013 found that 45% of respondents spent three hours or longer on their visit, so fewer opening hours would be likely to have a negative impact on those visitors who may want/need to spend a good stretch of time on their research. For customers with work or other commitments during the week, visiting on a Saturday may be their only opportunity. For those for whom it may be the only day they can visit, reducing the number of available hours would be likely to have a proportionately high negative impact. The impact is also likely to be negative for those visitors we attract from outside the local area who travel some distance and need to make the most of their time at the Record Office.

Recommendation: to continue the current number of opening hours per Saturday

5.6 Customer feedback point 8: open on one or no Saturday per month

This option would represent a significant reduction (50-100%) to the Saturday openings being offered in the trial and would significantly affect those customers who may only be able to visit on a Saturday.

Recommendation: to continue opening on two Saturdays per month as per the year's trial

Jane Harris, Senior Archivist, Customer Services, Archives and Local Studies at Hampshire Record Office

Oct 2014