

Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of Regeneration & Environment Overview and Scrutiny to be held on 9th January, 2020

BC

Subject:

Libraries Service

Summary statement:

This report provides an update to a previous report of this committee on 24 July 2019 and includes details of the outcomes of a library needs assessment undertaken during May 2019 to July 2019 and indicative findings of a subsequent district wide public engagement exercise.

The findings from both the assessment and engagement exercises will be used to support the development of proposals for the future delivery of library services and delivery of the agreed budget savings for the financial year 2020-21.

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Portfolio:

Healthy People & Places

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in developing options for the future delivery of the library service and the budget savings for 2020-21 agreed by Council in February 2019.
- 1.2 Arriving at a set of options for the delivery of savings for these service areas is challenging given the scale of the budget savings agreed and future cultural ambitions of the Council. There is a statutory obligation on the Council, to ensure that future decision making is robust and transparent and that future proposals are evidenced based with a focus on the needs of the Bradford communities.
- 1.3 Since the last report of this Committee on 24th July 2019, the library service has concluded a district wide library needs assessment which provided the basis for a district wide public engagement exercise which will close on 20th December 2019. Members will recall from the previous report that any significant work on developing proposals undertaken prior to the completion of the assessment and public engagement activities would not be deemed to be sufficiently evidenced based to the extent which is required.
- 1.4 Members will appreciate that at the time of the preparation of this report, there had been insufficient time to undertake a full assessment of the outcome of the public engagement, however up to date information will be provided at the meeting. To give a flavour of the indicative findings, it can be reported that there has been extensive public feedback to date with 1,475 responses to the engagement questionnaire being completed as at 12th December 2019 and over 550 people attending public drop in sessions.
- 1.5 During this period of engagement a number of discussions have taken place with colleagues from the Health & Wellbeing Directorate concluding a joint recognition of the impact that libraries have on tackling a number of Public Health Outcomes including; Social Isolation; Poverty; Back to Employment & School Readiness. These discussions have resulted in a proposal being included in the latest budget report to Executive for a recurring financial investment of £0.7m to support a new offer in libraries with an enhanced focus on their role in promoting health and well-being activities. This will help to inform plans to re-shape library services in order to sustain a viable and accessible network into the future.
- 1.6 The next stage of proposal development has now commenced and will include a detailed analysis of the public engagement feedback to ensure future designs are aligned to community needs and support meaningful public consultation. At the time of writing this report it can be reported that further collaborative design sessions will be held with Health and Wellbeing colleagues and other key stakeholders during December 2019 and early January 2020. It is expected that proposals setting out the future delivery of library services will be available for public and staff consultation during the first quarter of 2020 and prior to consideration by the Executive.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Library Services

2.1.1 The Library Service is a statutory service and currently provides a network of 29 Libraries across the district with 10 being run directly by the Council, 2 Hybrid libraries (combination of staff and volunteers) and 17 community or venue managed libraries.

2.1.2 There is an opportunity to introduce changes to the way in which the library services are operated, but there are a number of critical requirements which will ensure that the Council remain statutorily compliant and include:-

- 1) Identification of service need through rational and focused community needs assessment
- 2) Identification of resources where this is relevant; and resources are available to meet the service needs.
- 3) Identification of the potential range of local changes that could meet 1 using the resources in 2.
- 4) Meaningful public and staff consultation on which changes to adopt
- 5) Transition and implementation.

2.1.3 In February 2019, Executive agreed budget savings of £1.05m leaving a remaining gross service budget for 2020-21 of £1.77m. Since the decision taken by the Executive in February and following extensive public engagement feedback, there are further proposals contained within the current budget report to Executive for a recurring health and wellbeing investment of £0.7m to support a new offer in libraries with an enhanced focus on their role in promoting health and well-being activities. This investment if approved at Executive in February 2020 will help to inform plans to re-shape the library services in order to sustain a viable and accessible network into the future.

2.1.4 It is inevitable that the scale of budget reductions requires the Council to develop significant changes in the existing methods of delivering the library service and proposals currently being considered include, alternative delivery through community groups, co-location/delivery with other services, greater levels of income generation and use of technology. In addition there will be a need to transform the library service to ensure that it is able to deliver an enhanced health and wellbeing offer linked to directly to the potential investment made.

2.1.5 As set out earlier in this report, any future proposals must be evidenced based, cognisant of community need and demonstrate the ability to maintain a comprehensive and efficient library service. This will be evidenced through a review of existing library provision (including those run by community groups/organisations), using the findings from a library needs assessment undertaken during May 2019 to July 2019 and a thorough review of feedback from a district wide public engagement exercise which closes on 20th December 2019.

2.1.6 An initial review on the operation of the library services which are delivered via community groups and organisations highlighted that whilst these delivery models provide a strong platform for future delivery options, there are a number of

improvements that could be made which would realise the following benefits:-

- Increased support from the Council to ensure future sustainability including advice on access to alternative funding arrangements.
- A revised offer that evidences compliance with statutory responsibilities and strengthens the culture of a “single library network” across the district.
- A stronger “community led” approach that recognises and values the work of volunteers and the support required directly from the library service.

2.1.7 The activities outlined in Para’s 2.1.5 and 2.1.6 above are considered to be critical to ensuring that the Council remains compliant with its statutory and legal duties and any future proposals should only be presented when this work is completed.

2.1.6 Initial collaborative design sessions have taken place to ensure a consistent understanding of the vision and ambitions of a future library service across key partners including Public Health, Health & Wellbeing and other 3rd sector organisations. Further design sessions are planned during December 2019 and early January 2020 and the outcomes of these session will help shape more detailed proposals for future public and staff consultation.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has a statutory duty to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service, and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities on their functions in relation to libraries. The Secretary of State has the power to make a remedial order against a library authority following a local inquiry. Before deciding whether to order an inquiry, the Secretary of State will carefully consider the local authorities compliance under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. All stages of the assessment and progression of proposals are being discussed with DCMS to mitigate any potential risks of such action by the Secretary of State in the future.

4. OUTCOME OF LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSEMENT AND INDICATIVE FINDINGS FROM CURRENT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

4.1 Library Needs Analysis

4.1.1 During the period May 2019 to July 2019 a Library Needs Analysis was undertaken. This provides data on different aspects of the library service and the communities it serves and includes a range of data about our library services and local demographic factors. The analysis included a representative survey of 800 non-user residents, defined as someone who hasn’t visited a library in the last 12 months with a key focus on achieving the following:

- Establish what respondents think about libraries
- Explore local knowledge of libraries
- Identify what would encourage a greater use of libraries in the future
- Establish what priority respondents give to various aspects of library provision and the Council’s wider strategic priorities

4.1.2 The Library Needs Analysis also included an online survey designed to seek the views of library users. The Council's Stay Connected database was used to achieve almost 2000 respondents. The survey was designed to gain feedback on the following:

- Why they chose to visit a library
- What library services they use
- What is important to them as part of a library service
- What would encourage them to continue to use a library

4.1.3 The detailed findings from the needs analysis are contained in **Appendix 1** and summaries have been shared with all Members and Council staff. Following feedback from the above groups, the outcomes were used to develop a further more specific questionnaire to be used for public engagement.

4.1.4 It was also agreed that further detailed service information was to be provided alongside the questionnaire to enable respondents to have a more informed opinion. Additional information included the following:

- Individual library profile including key performance and financial data
- Engagement narrative which captured the future vision for the service and how the feedback from engagement would be used to support the future development of proposals for consultation.
- Full details of the library needs assessment carried.

4.2 Engagement and Consultation

4.2.1 Given the potential impact of any future proposals, and in response to the concerns previously raised by members of this Committee, the library service has adopted a two phased approach to engagement and consultation supported by an overarching Communications & Engagement Strategy approved by the programme Steering Group in September 2019.

4.2.2 Stage One - Engagement is defined as approaches undertaken by the service that creates a stronger two-way relationship between the Council and communities. The approach included a need to both share the information we have collated with stakeholders, explain the challenge and findings to date and encourage an open two way dialogue. It was not purely about information giving, where residents are informed but have no influence, but was focused on engaging with members of the public, employees and wider stakeholder groups to hear their views as we develop future plans.

4.2.3 An Engagement Plan was developed during September 2019 and Members were briefed on the proposed approach. In addition to Member briefings, meetings were held with the Arts Council England and DCMS Libraries Team, together with a follow-up conference call.

4.2.4 Three employee engagement workshops were held during the first week of October, to which all Libraries, Museum and Galleries employees were invited. The purpose of these sessions was to share information and data, encourage

discussions with colleagues in an informal environment and obtain their views on the potential options for change.

- 4.2.5 Following feedback from Members, senior management and staff, the plan was refined with regard to timescale and to include the need for an external review, additional public drop-in sessions, Facebook advertising, and the development of a final questionnaire, which is attached for information at **Appendix 2**. The questionnaire was made available on-line via the Libraries web page and paper copies were available in Libraries. E-mails were sent to MP's and Elected Members and public engagement was launched at the beginning of November via the Bradford MDC website, social media, Bradnet, a media release and e-mails to Stay Connected subscribers and Head Teachers via Bradford Schools Online.
- 4.2.6 A total of 28 Public drop-in sessions have been held at both council and community managed libraries across the whole district and engagement sessions have been held with Community Managed Library Accountable Bodies, Area Committees and Town & Parish Councils where this has been requested. In addition, letters were sent to residents who receive home library visits and support on completing the questionnaire provided.
- 4.2.7 A number of meetings were also held with key contacts for BME, LGBTQ, Young People and Disability groups and Area Co-ordinators to ensure that the approach proposed was inclusive and responsive to the diverse population of the district. Lead contacts promoted completion of the survey across their networks and via Ward Officers, Youth Service Commissioners and Bradford Council of Mosques. In addition, officers attended Youth Service meetings and the Access to Information Group meeting, formed of members of the public with sensory needs and learning disabilities. Library employees with additional language skills were also available upon request to support public drop in sessions.
- 4.2.8 The survey was also promoted through an article circulated via Bradford Schools on-line, various social media accounts and targeted Facebook advertising to areas of low response and in particular the 18 to 24 age group.

4.3 Summary of engagement feedback - December 2019

- 4.3.1 Further details of the indicative findings from the public engagement exercise at the time of writing this report are attached for information at **Appendix 3**, and can be summarised as follows:-

- 4.3.1.1 Use of Volunteers - respondents see volunteers as a resource that can enhance library provision, however they should not be used to replace paid professional staff which may cause a service delivery issue as volunteers cannot always be relied on . There is a recognition also that volunteers require robust support in terms of co-ordination and training by the Council. There are circa 200 people across the district who are willing to discuss volunteering opportunities further with the library service.

- 4.3.1.2 Increased use of technology - 90% of respondents identified the use of up-to-

date ICT is an essential part of a library service. Respondents also identified that many people in the district do not have access to IT, equipment and printing. A further common theme regarding the provision of technology is the need to have experienced, helpful and knowledgeable staff to help individuals overcome barriers to digital access.

4.3.1.3 Location - we asked would you agree that it is reasonable to use proximity to other libraries when developing future proposals. 56% did not agree this was a suitable measure to use when developing future proposals. Respondents also commented on the need for libraries to be within walking distance and should not become a regional resource.

4.3.1.4 Community Managed Libraries - 53% of respondents suggested that people in communities have expertise which we could draw on and would enable libraries to stay open for longer but qualified this by stating that we should not be solely dependent on volunteers to do this. Respondents also identified that more affluent areas with greater number of professional residents would see greater successes in providing community managed libraries. There were some critical comments made about community delivered libraries particularly in terms of the consistency of the “offer” and it will important for the library service to consider these comments carefully when making improvements in this area.

4.3.1.5 Wider Priorities - we asked respondents to tell what they think our priorities should be when considering our libraries and the communities they serve. 7 priorities were identified and the top 3 identified by respondents are:

- Supporting and providing service for Young People (under 17)
- Supporting and providing services for Older People (over 65)
- Supporting an providing service for People with disabilities

4.3.1.6 Innovation – Can we do things differently? - Respondents commented on many different aspects of service provision and some common themes are starting emerge as follows:

- Extend the range of activities provided within libraries for older people and children
- Ensure our ICT is accessible and ‘modern’
- Make our libraries modern, welcoming places with up to date and comprehensive resources
- Introduce cafes
- Have well trained staff
- Open up the library space for others to use
- Join up our thinking around a libraries’ role in wider issues such as mental and physical health and wellbeing

4.3.1.7 In addition to the feedback gained via public engagement, there has been a wide range of feedback provided by library staff and the detail is currently being analysed and will be included in up to date information at the committee meeting.

5. HEALTH & WELLBEING INVESTMENT

- 5.1 During the period of engagement a number of discussions have taken place with key stakeholders to consider the potential for wider investment in the library service. These discussions have resulted in a proposal being included in the latest budget report to Executive for a recurring investment of £0.7m from the Health & Wellbeing directorate to support a new offer in libraries with an enhanced focus on their role in promoting health and well-being. This will help to inform plans to re-shape library services in order to sustain a viable and accessible network into the future.
- 5.2 It is recognised that health is as much about keeping people well as it is about diagnosis, treatment and cure. Over the last few years, the Council's public health and children's and adult social care services have been working to place greater focus on prevention and the wider determinants of health in order to keep people well and to reduce pressure on NHS and other public services.
- 5.3 There is an opportunity for libraries to become hubs to act as a focal point for people to gather, to mix and talk, helping to address loneliness and social isolation. Libraries can also provide a range of information on local events, employment and training opportunities.
- 5.5 Health and Wellbeing outcomes will now be a key consideration in any future redesign of the library service and key representatives from the relevant areas will be included in the associated proposal design sessions over the coming weeks.

6 Summary & Next Steps

- 6.1 Since the last report there has been significant progress made with the key activities described in this report which will provide a sound evidence base on which to develop proposals further.
- 6.2. Further design sessions are to be held in December and early January 2019 with key partners and wider stakeholders and staff and outcomes from these sessions will be fed into proposal development.
- 6.3 It is anticipated that proposals will be available for public consultation early in 2020 and any findings will be included in a final report to be considered by the Executive prior to implementation.

7. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The 4 year budget process is part way through with 2020-21 savings of £1.05m still to be delivered and completing the 4 year programme of change.
- 7.2 If approved following public consultation for next years budget, the additional £0.7m investment from Health & Wellbeing will increase the gross service budget (following the £1.05m saving) to £2.47m for the financial year 2020-21

- 7.3 Until any new financial proposals are finalised, it is not possible to provide further details of the financial implications of future proposals. These will be included within the final proposals presented to be considered in the libraries public and staff consultation and then presented for consideration by Executive..

8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- 8.1 A dedicated steering group including resources from Finance, HR, and Facilities Management & Legal has been established to provide oversight to the development of future proposals, consultation and subsequent implementation activities and will report directly to the Place Budget Delivery Board.
- 8.2 In recognition of the challenging transformation programme and potential for wider investment on a Council wide basis, a senior level board has been established including all relevant strategic directors and representatives from the library service. The board is currently meeting weekly and will provide strategic oversight during the development of proposals and wider statutory consultation activities.
- 8.3 The findings and recommendations arising from the library needs assessment and subsequent public consultation will be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the district

9. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 9.1 Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to provide a comprehensive and efficient service through the provision of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. An assessment of the needs which the library service should meet must be carried out in order to be able to demonstrate that any changes still comply with the statutory requirements. .
- 9.2 Consultation is to be undertaken on the options for the library service. The consultation is to be carried out in accordance with the following principles:-
- Consultation must be undertaken at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
 - The proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response
 - Adequate time must be given for consideration and response
 - The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Not yet known until proposals are fully developed

10.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

10.1.1 Equalities Impact Assessments will be produced in accordance with statutory requirements. The Council will have due regard to its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 in formulating proposals for the future of the library service.

10.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not known at this stage.

10.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Not considered at this stage

10.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

10.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

10.6 TRADE UNION

10.6.1 Whilst there are no direct implications from the content of this report, the library service is mindful of the challenging employee relations issues arising from the consultation approach adopted for the delivery of 2019-20 budget savings. In particular, early staff engagement has already commenced and key staff have been included in service re-design sessions. Any proposals arising will be subject to full staff consultation in accordance with statutory and local policy requirements.

10.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

10.7.1 No immediate implications noted .

10.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

None

10.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None

11. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Regeneration and Environment Committee consider the updates provided and advise Officers on any future reporting requirements.

13. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Needs Analysis

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

Appendix 3 – Indicative findings – Engagement Feedback

14. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None