

Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of the Executive to be held on 24 March 2020

Subject:

BL

The future of Bradford District library service

Summary statement:

This report seeks approval to adopt a new strategic direction for the library service including a new “vision” and “library service model” following a period of formal public consultation on the proposals as detailed in this report.

This report has not been included on the published forward plan as an issue for consideration however the Council made a proposal to invest £700k of Public Health Funding in to the Library Service, which was resolved on 20th February 2020 and therefore this will have a significant change to the library service, which will require a new model of working from 1st April 2020. Therefore, this item is a matter of urgency subject to the approval of the investment a new library model will need to be agreed for the future. As it is impractical to defer the decision until it has been included in the published Forward Plan the report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in the Council’s Constitution.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 A new strategic approach for the future delivery of Bradford District library services from 2020 to 2025 has been developed. It includes a new “vision” for the service, a set of design “principles” and a new “library service” model which will provide a framework for managing future change programmes during the five year strategy period. In line with statutory obligations, the proposals to adopt the approach and model are currently subject to district wide public consultation. This report seeks approval of the proposed model for the future.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Bradford Council is very proud of the library service across the Bradford District, however like many other local authorities across the country has needed to consider changes to how library services are delivered as a result of significant financial challenges. When the library service began a review over 12 months ago, it was faced with an agreed saving target of £1.05m to achieve in 2020-21 against a backdrop of a national and local picture showing a declining use of libraries.
- 2.2 To meet this challenge, the service has had to think about libraries in a different way and not just from a position of achieving savings which would inevitably result in a further declining position. The strategic ambition for the Library service is to approach service redesign in a way that builds on the great work we already do with a focus on unlocking the huge potential that libraries have to improve individuals’ ‘lives’ while at the same time, delivering local and national priorities.
- 2.3 In recognition of the central role that libraries have within communities and to ensure that future decisions are evidenced based on local need, over the last 12 months the service have undertaken a detailed library needs assessment and district wide engagement exercise. The service received thousands of responses, and summary findings indicated that there is currently a comprehensive district-wide library offer that delivers a valuable service within communities. However the current model on its own is not financial sustainable and there is a growing appreciation of the opportunities that libraries present for positively impacting on wider district priorities. The feedback on what residents expect to see in libraries also highlighted that and residents expect to see libraries evolving and being more connected to communities through a wider range of services.
- 2.4 The information gathered, highlighted that libraries are much more than traditional book lending facilities, as important as that is, there are a wider range of activities that are carried out. This led us to consider what more they could offer to help support outcomes for Health and Wellbeing generally and was central to decisions taken on what the future library service might look like. This resulted in a proposal to partly meet the library service savings by a base budget investment of £700k from the Health & Wellbeing budget. In particular this additional investment will be used to build on the work that libraries already do in this area, e.g. activities that support improvements in social isolation like “knit and natter” and “reading groups”. Library services will be developed with a focus on enhancing the public Health offer with a particular focus on improvements against four public health outcomes,

tackling poverty, addressing social isolation, assisting people back into employment and helping with school readiness. Example additional activities currently being discussed include libraries being used as “hydration stations” and offering greater employment support e.g. CV writing workshops. The additional investment proposal was subject to formal public consultation as part of the Council’s budget approval process and has now been agreed. The service also anticipates that further potential funding opportunities are available that would help sustain the service longer term.

2.5 The ability to work within a different financial envelope gives us the opportunity to support a commitment to retain an existing network of 29 libraries in broadly existing localities subject to local needs, supported by a district wide home library service. It also provides the opportunity to consult further with the people of Bradford District about how this investment will be used at both a district and local level which will result in us achieving the best possible outcomes for residents. In recognition of the commitment to retain all existing library services, agreements have been reached with community and hybrid managed libraries to extend current contracts for a period of 12 months to 1 April 2020.

2.6 Strategic approach for future management of library services

2.6.1 To support future strategic ambitions, and using all of the information captured through the review the service have developed a revised approach which includes a refreshed “vision” underpinned by a set of design “principles” and a new “library service model” which together provides an overall strategic framework that allows the service to evolve for the future.

2.6.2 The vision for Bradford District library services for 2020 to 2025 has been developed using local information and is aligned to the national vision for public libraries set by the Department for Culture Media and Sports (DCMS). It is underpinned by an ambition to retain the current library network with a focus on “re-inventing” and more aligned to achieving outcomes at both a district and local level and is to:-

“develop a 21st century library service that continues to provide a core library service, that is flexible and enables us to enhance the quality of life of people and communities, is inclusive and vibrant, , supports wider district priorities, enables all users to learn, engage and remain connected to their communities, and is outcomes focused at a local level”.

2.6.3 Using the national libraries “universal offers” (*further detail in appendix 1*) as a guide a set of design principles have been developed that set out what libraries should be:-

- Be **inclusive**; offering a free safe space and a place to meet for all.
- Be at the **heart of the community** reflecting local need supporting improved outcomes.
- Retains a **core library function** in line with statutory requirements
- **Connects with other services** allowing access to information, advice and signposting to ensure we make every contact count.
- **Creative** and mindful of wider cultural ambitions
- Adopt a **Partnership approach** to working, which brings together a range of

partner organisations, local groups and education institutions – working better together for greater outcomes.

2.6.4 The proposed new library service model is made up of 6 key components as set out in the diagram below. Each level is described in more detail in **appendix 1** and therefore only a summary of the overall approach is set out in this report below.



2.6.4.1 The model essentially provides a framework for how the service should operate and manage future library changes. It sets out the ambition to retain all 29 libraries in current locations and proposes delivery via a mixed approach to staffing and service delivery accountability e.g. community and Council managed arrangements.

2.6.4.2 The model also includes moving to a service based approach rather than the traditional building base with an acknowledgement that some buildings are iconic and have greater significance within a community. It sets out an ambition to maximise the wider funding opportunities that are available to ensure longer term financial sustainability.

2.6.4.3 Within the model there is a core offer that residents can expect to see as a minimum at Council managed libraries, with an ambition that community managed libraries (who don't already provide the core) will sign up to a commitment to delivering a consistent set of core services in the future which will see the whole library network operating as an "ecosystem" of interconnected libraries rather than being seen as 29 individual libraries.

2.6.4.5 In addition to the core offer there will be a tailored element at each library where additional services will be provided based on the size of the library and local need. The tailored offer will build on existing activities that support health and wellbeing outcomes and may include additional services e.g. housing benefit and debt advice and or co-location of other partners including voluntary sector organisations. The range of services offered will however be subject to wider discussions and agreement.

- 2.6.4.6 The proposed model is a menu and does not set out what each library will look like in the future.
- 2.6.4.7 When this consultation is completed and subject to final approval of this Committee, it will then be used to support the design at an individual library level. This will involve carrying on the conversation with residents, staff and wider stakeholders and implementing the tailored offer of changes during the financial year 2020-21.
- 2.7 The new approach to building a future library service, is currently subject to formal public consultation. The approach for consultation takes account of the guidance issued by the Department for Culture Media and Sport for public consultation.
- 2.7.1 The background for this consultation is provided within an information pack developed with key staff from across the library service and wider stakeholders and is included for reference at **appendix 1**. The document provides information to show how the outcomes from previous consultation and engagement exercises have been used and sign post residents to other more detailed information which may help inform the response to this consultation.
- 2.7.2 The public consultation was launched on 10 February 2020 and will close on 15 March 2020 and therefore at the time of writing this report, it is too early to provide an update on the outcomes of public consultation. However Council offers will be available to provide an update at the Executive meeting to be held on 24 March 2020 and an additional appendix to this report will be made available to the public following the meeting.
- 2.7.3 To ensure that all key stakeholders across the district were informed of the consultation, information was provided to MP's and Elected Members, made available on the Councils internal and external website and wider social media channels. In addition, there are a number of public consultation drop in sessions planned across the District including with Parish and Town Councils.
- 2.8 Summary and next steps
- 2.8.1 The consultation exercise for the proposed library model will be concluded on 15th March 2020 and an update on the outcomes of consultation will be provided to the Executive at the meeting on 24 March 2020. If agreed by the executive, the next steps are to develop the options for individual libraries based on the model and taking into account different locality needs. This work will be completed during 2020. Where there are changes to library provision at a local level and where it is deemed appropriate, further public and staff consultation will be undertaken .
- 2.8.2. The scope of the change programme from April 2020 onwards is currently subject to further discussions and planning.
- 2.8.3 At the time of writing this report, consultation is ongoing and therefore the findings from this cannot be presented as part of this report. However officers will be available at the meeting to provide an update on the outcome of consultation which closes on 15 March 2020.

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 of 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.
- 3.2 Before deciding whether to order an inquiry, the Secretary of State will carefully consider the local authority's compliance under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. All stages of the assessment and progression of proposals have been discussed with DCMS to mitigate any potential risks of such action by the Secretary of State in the future.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The 2020/21 budget proposal approved additional funding of £700k to be allocated to the Library Service from the Public Health budget. This budget allocation is contingent upon the library model changing and the achievement of key public health outcomes of :-
- Tackling poverty
 - Social isolation
 - Back into employment
 - School readiness
- 4.2 Available funding therefore supports the need for a different model for library provision.
- 4.3 The library service anticipate that further additional funds could be available to meet the ambition for the future of libraries within the district.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 In recognition of the challenging transformation programme and potential for wider investment, a strategic libraries board has been established and is attended by all relevant strategic directors, representatives from the library service and corporate transformation team. The board will meet monthly and will provide strategic oversight during the development of proposals and wider consultation activities.
- 5.2 A dedicated steering group including resources from Finance, HR, Facilities Management and Legal services has been established to provide cross departmental oversight to the development of proposals, consultation and subsequent implementation activities and will report directly to the Place Budget Delivery Board.
- 5.3 The findings and recommendations arising from the library needs assessment and engagement work are captured within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the

district.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service pursuant to the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

6.2 Consultation is to be undertaken on the options for the library service. The consultation is to be carried out in accordance with the following well established 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.

6.3 Any consultation must be adequate and fair, taking into account what fairness requires in the particular circumstances. The nature of the change proposed by this phase of consultation has been considered by Legal Services when assessing the duty on the Council for this consultation. As proposals affecting individual libraries are developed, further consultation may be required, depending on what those proposals are. Where there are proposals for change that affect staff, appropriate staff and trade union consultation should be undertaken.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

7.1.1 The Council must have due regard to its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 in formulating proposals for the future of the library service and have produced an equality impact assessment to support this phase of consultation which is attached for reference at **appendix 2**.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

No sustainability implications from this report

7.3 TRADE UNION

7.3.1 Early staff engagement and consultation has already commenced and key staff, have been included in service re-design sessions, together with invitations to the trade unions to participate.

7.3.2 Consultation with the trade unions will be an on-going process through both informal and formal consultation processes. Where any changes affecting staff are proposed through individual library re-design during 2020-21 these will be subject to further detailed staff and trade union consultation processes.

7.4 WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 7.4.1 No immediate implications noted, however the next phase of development may impact on some wards and any implications will be included in future reports.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

none

9. OPTIONS

1. Continue with the current delivery of the library service

The library service risks losing the agreed investment from Public Health funding and the potential investment for the delivery of additional services and other services will need to invest to support the delivery of Public Health outcomes. This may ultimately result in further declining user numbers within libraries, leading to further reduction in library services across the District.

2. Support the revised strategic approach

Supporting this will enable the service to evolve in line with the vision that libraries will become community hubs, whilst continuing to offer a valuable core library service across the district. It will also support delivery of the extended offer and ensure that the future library service continues to be recognised for the contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of residents across the District. Adopting the model and the approach for change enables the service to focus on delivering activities that are aligned to community needs with the community having a voice and being able to actively influence local decisions. If Executive decide to support the revised strategic approach, further consultation may be required as proposals affecting individual libraries are developed.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the Council adopts the vision and library model for 2020-25 and delegates to the Strategic Director of Place to implement the delivery and development of the model for the future.
- 10.2 That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director Place to arrange for further consultation to be undertaken as required as proposals affecting individual libraries are developed.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Public Consultation Information Pack.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

